THE WORLD AWAITS

TRAVEL NOW

VOLUME THREE 2015
TravelNowMagazine
P195

WIN!
PRIZES FROM SM ACCESSORIES, I LOVE KOI, TACTICS, AND ALOE CURE!
TURN TO PAGE 10 FOR DETAILS

THE GREATEST OUTDOOR ESCAPES ON THE PLANET

THE WORLD IS YOUR PLAYGROUND

BE DAZZLED BY THE NORTHERN LIGHTS OF NORWAY

+

Marvel at the clear alpine lakes of **New Zealand**

Explore the jungles of **India** and **Nepal**

Roam the salt flats of **Bolivia**

Frolic in the waters of **Thailand** and **Indonesia**

Climb the mountains and valleys of **Taiwan, China,** and **Japan**

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS, AS SEEN FROM NORWAY

VISIT THE PHILIPPINES YEAR 2015

ONE MEGA GROUP INC.

9 771656 581908

PHILIPPINE THRILLS

Adventures in **Palawan**, **Cebu**, **Iloilo, Davao**, **Bohol**, and **La Union**

TRAVEL SMART

Dress up for outdoor trips
Nature-proof your belongings

PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE

Begin your own tradition.

You never actually own
a Patek Philippe.

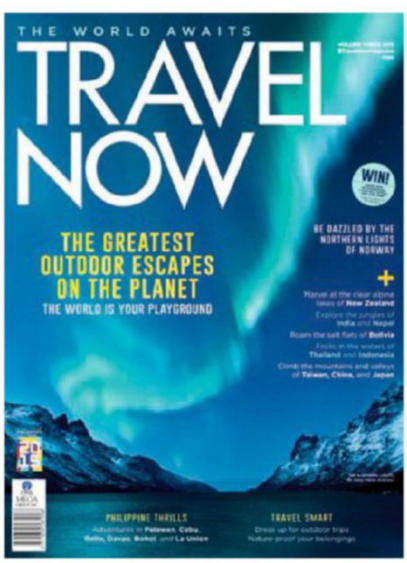
You merely look after it for
the next generation.

Annual Calendar Ref. 5205G

Tel: (65) 6732 1506
patek.com

Contents

MAY-JUNE 2015



On the Cover

NORWAY

Jamen Percy / 123RF Stock Photo

Page 21

Norway is one of the best places to see the Aurora Borealis, because while you will have much better luck in Svalbard and the northern region, you pretty much have a chance of seeing this phenomenon all over the country. Up your chances even more by visiting in late autumn, winter, or early spring.

Take Off

12 JOURNAL NOTES
Where to go, what to bring, and what you need to know on your next trip

20 GOOD TRIP
Read about how **Miguel Rivera** and **Team HOPE** are not only helping calamity-struck people rebuild, but also inspiring others to help out and be the change they want to see

21 ENVOY'S KEY
Let Norwegian Ambassador **Erik Førner** clue you in on the must-visit places and must-do activities when visiting **Norway**

24 SNAPSHOTS
Tips and recommendations for destinations around the world from travel bloggers

26 CITYLOGUE
Traveling with toddlers? Let mom **Emerlynne Gil** guide you on **Bangkok**'s must-visit places for travelers with tots in tow

FLIGHT TRACK

28 Get on an empire state of mind as **Philippine Airlines** launches its four times a week flight from Manila to New York

30 Dreaming to be a pilot? Let **WCC Aviation Company**, its dedicated teachers, and its world-class facilities and equipment help you become one

32 Say "Hola!" to Mexico and the rest of South America with **Aeromexico**

SUITE LIFE

34 Experience the heart of the city by staying at **Marco Polo Davao**

36 Need a quick getaway from everyday stress? Book a staycation in these four hotels for that much-needed break

Smart Travel

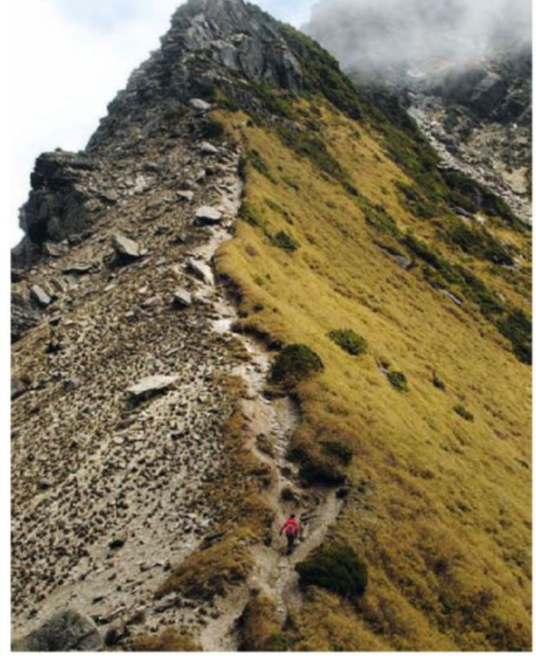
42 Suddenly going on a unplanned trip? Don't sweat it. **TRAVEL NOW** teaches you the art of winging it

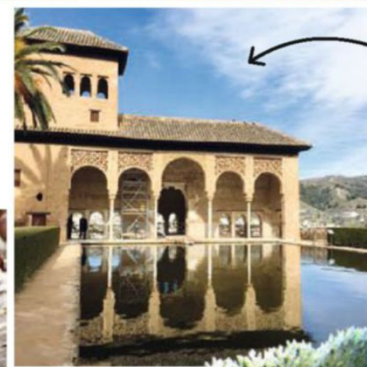
43 Pack these **TRAVEL NOW**-recommended outdoor essentials in your luggage for a comfortable and hassle-free trip

44 Learn how to put together a basic outdoor outfit for your adventures

46 Protect your gadgets and other personal belongings by nature-proofing them

48 Let *The Voice of the Philippines*' Kai Honasan teach you how to create the perfect soundtrack to your trip





Destinations

50 Get behind the lens of the camera as Metro Photo's **Oly Ruiz** and **Erron Ocampo** share their almost magical wedding shoot in **New Zealand**

58 Tag along with **Gideon Lasco** as he explores the mountains and trails that **Taiwan** has to offer

62 India's **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** may not be as popular as other island destinations, but their ruins, beaches, and jungles are more than worth the effort to get here

66 Satisfy the beach being in you by booking a trip to frolic in the beaches of **Krabi**, **Phuket**, and **Phang Nga** in southern **Thailand**

70 **Mirella Isabel Gallego** gets inspired by **Granada, Spain**'s unique architecture and breathtaking landscapes

74 Feast your eyes on the many colors of **Bolivia**

78 See the colorful **Dinagyang Festival** in **Iloilo City** through the lens of **Hugues-Antoine Suin**

84 Does **Palawan** really deserve its nickname as "The World's Best Island?" A visit to **Puerto Princesa** and **El Nido** will definitely make you believe so

88 **Kevin Go** dives into the waters of **Cebu** and shows us why even underwater, it really is more fun in the Philippines

94 A TRAVELER'S JOURNAL
Itching to create your own travel diary? Get inspiration from letterer **Abbey Sy**'s own journal

98 WORLD TRAVELER
Catch up on the many adventures of Lifestyle Asia's Deputy Editor and Publisher **Cheryl Tiu** as she shares with us her favorite places all over the world

GOURMET

102 Let your taste buds do the traveling as you explore these restaurants in **UP Town Center**

104 Craving for some authentic Thai food? Whether you're in Bangkok or Metro Manila, **Mango Tree** will surely sate your appetite

106 Get your caffeine fix from these coffee places from all over the world

In Every Issue

6 ED'S NOTE

8 CONTRIBUTORS' PAGE

108 EVENTS

114 POSTSCRIPT

116 CARRY ON
Rocco Nacino shares his travel essentials

THE WORLD AWAITS

TRAVEL NOW

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MARBEE SHING-GO

MANAGING EDITOR
KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO

EDITORIAL COORDINATOR
DIANNE SOLEIL VIRAY

ART
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
MERIAM OTARRA

FINAL ARTIST
MARK XAVIER P. VILLANUEVA

CONTRIBUTORS
WRITERS
Kristine Agustin, Charlene Bobis, Florian Efinger, Mirella Isabel Gallego, Guia Galvez, Emerlynne Gil, Kevin Go, Cristina Gregorio, Kai Honasan, Portia D. Ladrido, Gideon Lasco, Jamie Luy, Angelo Ramirez De Cartagena, Kit Singson, Abbey Sy

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Nils Dieckmann, Dan Doydora, Joy Go, Ron Mendoza of Studio 100, Erron Ocampo, John Ocampo of Studio 100, Oly Ruiz, Martin San Diego, Jerick Sanchez of Studio 100, Hugues-Antoine Suin

ILLUSTRATORS
Lara Espineda, Dana de Leon, Ivana Tyler Gonzalez, Kimchi Lee

SPECIAL PROJECTS
ART DIRECTOR Kenneth Rivera
COPYWRITER Stephanie Puyod
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS Kathleen Ferrer, Aerish Sta. Ana

EDITORIAL ADMIN ASSOCIATE
Erica Luna

PUBLISHER / SENIOR SALES & MARKETING MANAGER
RYAN ROS CALMANTE

AVP FOR CREATIVES & PRODUCTION
SUKI SALVADOR

ONE MEGA GROUP

CHAIRMAN
J. TIU

DOUNDER & CEO
SARI V. YAP

FOUNDING CREATIVE DIRECTOR
J. LORRAINE V. BELMONTE

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT Archie Carrasco

OPERATIONS
RESEARCH & FINANCIAL ANALYST Sophie Menor
ADMIN ASSOCIATE Angela Jacob

ADVERTISING SALES
SENIOR SALES & MARKETING MMANAGERS Ryan Ros Calmante, Maite Tamparong-Uy
SENIOR SALES & MARKETING SUPERVISOR James Cruz
KEY ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Moi Busto, Arvie Dizon, Angela de Jesus, Bianca Bernardo
ACCOUNT SPECIALIST / OIC FASHION & LIFESTYLE Kathleen Amante
SENIOR DIRECT ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Chattie Saludo
DIRECT ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Fenelle Victoria, Faye Abuyo, Nicole Vergara, Mike Cabbo
SALES SUPPORT SUPERVISOR Carmelli Daet
ADVERTISING TRAFFIC ASSOCIATE Zhane Monterola
ADVERTISING TRAFFIC ASSISTANT Eunizel Carbonell

MARKETING COMMUNICATONS
MEDIA RELATIONS ASSOCIATE Larize Lee

INTERNAL EVENTS
SR. EVENTS SUPERVISOR Denise Pantano
EVENTS ASSOCIATE Marvin Mancera
EVENTS ASSISTANTS Kristine Yan, Roby Franco, Arriane Sanchez

DIGITAL MEDIA
DIGITAL MEDIA HEAD Erben Pilapil
SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER Yasmin Oplado
WEB DEVELOPERS Julien Tañada, Paula Mendoza, Diana Sumera
DIGITAL GRAPHIC DESIGNER Michael Tumlad
DIGITAL MEDIA COORDINATOR Patricia Nuguid

PRODUCTION
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR Allen de Guzman
FINAL ARTIST Geoffrey Julian
PRODUCTION TRAFFIC ASSOCIATE Honey Bagsic
QUALITY CONTROL ASSOCIATE Rodel Tutor
QUALITY CONTROL ASSISTANT MC Montealegre

EVENTS 100
EVENTS ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Brent Castro
EVENTS ASSISTANTS Ray Taiño, Terence Jamilano
PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE Nicole Cazeñas

STUDIO 100
TV HEAD Michael Carandang
PRODUCER Kimm Hadap
ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS Mico Esquivel, Baschia Mariano
POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR Venu Cruzada
VIDEO EDITORS Jasper Bermejo, Rach Santos, Mark Legaste
TV COORDINATOR Arjie Mendoza
TECHNICAL CUSTODIAN JR Ramirez
HEAD PHOTOGRAPHER Zac Moran
SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER Ed Simon
PHOTOGRAPHERS Mark Jacob, Ron Mendoza, John Ocampo
JUNIOR PHOTOGRAPHERS Mike Cuevas, Jerick Sanchez
VIDEOGRAPHER Tarish Zamora

CIRCULATION
CIRCULATION MANAGER Emilita Eladia
SALES ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE Michelle Cruz
TRADE MARKETING ASSOCIATES Abigaile Paulino, Francis Lamoste
TEAM LEADERS Lecie Non, Arnold Abogada, Napoleon Roperoga, Darlito Taglay Jr.

RETAIL 100
STORE ASSOCIATE Ana Marie Manlulu

OFFICE OF THE CEO
SR. EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT Avy Lagarto
INTERNAL AUDIT MANAGER Imelda Lim

HUMAN RESOURCES
HR MANAGER Leeca Austria
HR ASSOCIATES Ryana Panlilio, Marby Eslabra
PAYROLL EXECUTIVE Kamella Manlulu

FINANCE
SR. FINANCE MANAGER Jonah Vacio
ACCOUNTING MANAGER Alma Alarcon
SR. ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT Maileen Capilitan
PURCHASING SUPERVISOR Dennis Curitana
BILLING ASSOCIATE Cecilia Templo
ACCOUNTING ASSISTANT Kristabelle Peralta
CREDIT & COLLECTION MANAGER Sheila Perez
CREDIT & COLLECTION ASSISTANTS Emman Fullon, Marivic Baltazar, Elizabeth Esala, Christine Castillo, Lorie Jante
COLLECTOR Asidelio Alcantara

ADMINISTRATION
ADMIN MANAGER Arlene Buenviaje
MOTORPOOL SUPERVISOR Ali Macatangay
ADMIN ASSISTANTS Joy Flaviano, Meldie Diente
RECEPTIONIST Aiza Tiongson

LOGISTICS
LOGISTICS MANAGER Arlene Buenviaje
LOGISTICS SUPERVISOR Bong Villegas
LOGISTICS ASSISTANT Mariel Moreno
WAREHOUSE ASSISTANT Erwin Nicolas
WAREHOUSEMEN Henry Tapit, John Argonza
DRIVERS & DELIVERY STAFF Larry Dumali, Lito Hernaez Jr., Romy Javier, Niño Reyes

LIBRARY & INFORMATION
OIC Leeca Austria
LIBRARY & INFORMATION OFFICER Leanne Tiongson
LIBRARY ASSISTANT Jennifer Suela

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
SOFTWARE PROGRAMMER Kevin Samaniego

TRAVEL NOW IS PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY BY THE ONE MEGA GROUP: 18/F STRATA 100 BLDG., F. ORTIGAS JR. ROAD, ORTIGAS CENTER, 1605 PASIG, METRO MANILA, PHILIPPINES. P.O. BOX 12762, ORTIGAS CENTER, 1652 PASIG. TEL. NOS. TRUNKLINE (632) 631 2859; ADVERTISING (632) 635 2883; FAX NO. (632) 631 2862. <CUSTOMERSERVICES@ONEMEGAGROUP.COM>

UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE. WHILE EVERY REASONABLE CARE WILL BE TAKEN BY THE EDITORS, NO RESPONSIBILITY IS ASSUMED FOR THE RETURN OF UNSOLICITED MATERIAL. OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE SOLELY THOSE OF THE WRITERS AND NOT NECESSARILY ENDORSED BY OMG. REPRODUCTION OF PHOTOS AND ARTICLES IN FULL OR PART IS PROHIBITED, UNLESS PERMISSION IS SECURED FROM THE EDITORS.

Escape into the newest and best of Bohol.

HENANN RESORT
ALONA BEACH
BOHOL, PHILIPPINES

The biggest first class resort in Panglao Island, Bohol is now open! Henann Resort Alona Beach is a milestone in itself–the ultimate escape from the stresses of the modern world. Elevate your resort experience from all-inclusive to all-incredible here with us. In Henann, we make it worth your stay.

For reservations, contact us.
Resort: (63) (38) 502-9141 to 44 | reservations.hbl@henann.com
Manila Office: (63) (2) 230 3000 to 03 | manila.hbl@henann.com
www.henann.com/bohol

Beachfront, Alona Beach, Tawala Panglao Island, Bohol 6340, Philippines

REMEMBER JOINING A GROUP ON A TREK TO MOUNT PINATUBO SOME YEARS BACK. We started walking around 8 AM when the weather was cool and nippy. By 9 AM, the sun was high and it was starting to get hot. By 10 AM, it was very hot. "How long 'til we arrive at our destination?" I asked our guide for the nth time. "10 minutes *pa po*, ma'am," he said. After 30 minutes, we were still walking and nowhere near the view that was supposedly "life-changing." Another 30 minutes passed. I was getting cranky and grumpy. "*Kuya, malayo pa ba*?" "10 minutes *na lang po*, ma'am," was the response I got. I almost cried. Nature has a way of making you feel like everything you know and learned somehow cannot save you. We were in the middle of what looked like the same scene from hours ago and it was not changing as I looked ahead. Then I heard a squeal. About 20 steps in front of me, a friend was gushing. "It's so beautiful!" she said. I looked at the view. She was right. Lake Pinatubo, the crater lake at the summit of Mount Pinatubo, was beautiful. Its waters glistened lustrously under the noon sun. It stirred up awe and amazement. It changed my outlook. It changed me.

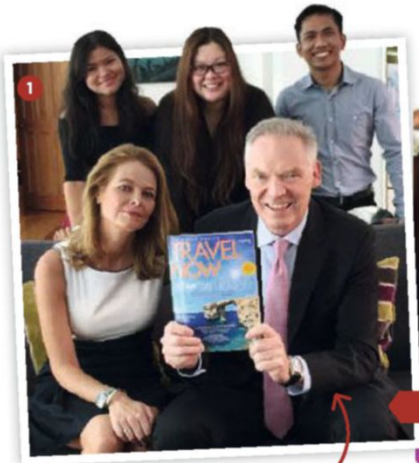
What is it about the great outdoors that changes us? According to my friend, Oly Ruiz, who talks about covering a wedding at The Remarkables mountain range in New Zealand (see page 50), it's an exhilarating contrast of sorts. He says, "It's one thing to see The Remarkables from afar (and there's a good reason the range of mountains is called such), and another to be on top of it. The experience of a whole new world up there is spectacular and while you feel insignificant one minute, you also feel as remarkable."

Sometimes we need to disconnect, to be away from our usual routine, to refresh ourselves. Experiencing the great outdoors and nature allows us a chance to reboot, re-align, and renew ourselves like no adrenaline pill can. In this issue, we highlight the adventure of the great outdoors. We give you stories on a mountain (Gideon Lasco's "Mountain Adventures in Taiwan" on page 58), the sea (Kevin Go's "Diving Deep" on page 88), and in between (Mirella Gallego's "A Mishmash of Influences" on page 70), among others.

We bring you all these wonderful stories because experiencing the great outdoors is a wonderful way to free your soul. Looking back to that trek to the crater lake of Mount Pinatubo—with all the good, the bad and the ugly—that experience is one that I will remember with fondness for a long, long time, because it is one that money cannot buy.

It's a wonderful world out there. So start your own adventure. The world awaits. Travel now.

MARBEE SHING-GO
Editor-in-Chief
marbee.go@onemegagroup.com
gomarbeego



AROUND & ABOUT

1 All smiles after a lovely afternoon chat with Ambassador Erik Førner and his beautiful wife Sille. On my left is **TRAVEL NOW**'s Graphic Designer Yam and on my right is Norway Embassy's Ian Agsalda. It was great working with you on this issue Ian! To see the Northern Lights in Norway is now at the very top of my bucket list **2** With my former Associate Editor, now Managing Editor, Klara at the launch of Canadian brand Native Footwear's Apollo Moc, graced by Canadian Ambassador Neil Reeder. Congratulations Klara! Here's to an exciting journey working side by side. **3** Philippine Airlines' President Jimmy Bautista, my husband Berg, and our favorite magazine at the PAL golf tournament awards night in Cebu prior to PAL's New York inaugural flight two days later. **4** With Tourism Authority of Thailand's Director for the Philippines and Singapore, Kannokkitika "Kate" Kritwutikon at the special dinner for partners of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) at Blackbird on the eve of the Thai Festival they organised with the Thai Embassy in Manila. Watch for the **TRAVEL NOW** exclusive project we're cooking up with the TAT and Kate in the next issue. **5** Fan moment with international tea brand Dilmah founder Merrill Fernando at the opening of the first Dilmah t-bar in the country at Radisson Blu in Cebu. His book on how he started Dilmah based on his passion—about how tea can save the world is amazing. And even more amazing is hearing him talk in person about his journey in tea. Thank you Neil Rumbaoa and Princes Anderle for this opportunity to meet Merrill Fernando (and to have him sign my book too).

WHERE IS THE TRAVEL NOW TEAM?

Managing Editor Klara enjoying a lazy afternoon swing at **Dibuluan Beach** in **El Nido, Palawan**

Graphic Designer Yam photographed against different hues of blue in **Mantigue Island, Camiguin**

Editorial Coordinator Dianne posing with new friends at the **Philippine Eagle Center** in **Davao City**

DRAWING
FROM
PASSION.
THE LIND
BORACAY
COMING SOON.
www.thelindhotels.com
@thelindhotels

MIRELLA ISABEL GALLEGO

Architectural Graduate, Firm Manager at Gallego Architects

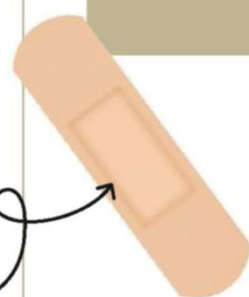
Went on a Spanish adventure in Granada on page 70

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE VISIT GRANADA?
Granada should be a must on everyone's travel bucket list because of the contrast of cultures—the Castile and the Moors, which has influenced the food, the music, the art, and architecture of the region. Granada is also so scenic that you take in the beauty of the old and new city with the hills, valleys, and plains that surround it.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR OUTDOOR TRAVEL ESSENTIALS?
My really comfy pair of walking shoes (as you need to be able to go long distances without hurting your feet), polarized sun glasses (to protect your eyes from the sun), a map of the area (to make sure you don't get lost), and adhesive bandages (because there is always a chance you will need one).

WHAT'S ON YOUR TRAVEL PLAYLIST?
My playlist always changes depending on where we are traveling to and how much the sun is shining! One of my must-play songs on trips is "I Lived" by OneRepublic as it always reminds me to take everything in and appreciate all the world has to offer.

WHERE ARE YOU TRAVELING TO NEXT?
The **Enchanted River** in **Surigao del Sur**. It looks so beautiful in photographs and for the longest time it was very hard to get to. Now there are flights to the region so I think now is a great time to go! It is so important to explore the Philippines as this is home and there is so much yet to see, explore, and learn.



WHY SHOULD PEOPLE VISIT BOLIVIA?
It is one of the safest areas in South America and it comes with well-preserved culture and wilderness. It is one of those authentic places where the people are still in their traditional wear even when walking around the capital. It is one of those pristine places where flamingos and other wild animals still roam freely and undisturbed in their natural habitat. And of course, the largest salt flats in the world is there—so vast and so beautiful.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR OUTDOOR TRAVEL ESSENTIALS?
A silk scarf, sunblock, a hat, and insect repellant. The silk scarf is light but works wonders in keeping me warm, being a little pillow when I sleep during long drives, protecting my face from dusty wind, and covering my head when it suddenly rains. The sunblock and hat help me avoid being sunburnt. I used to always have insect bites as souvenirs whenever I come home from my holidays hence the insect repellant.

WHAT'S ON YOUR TRAVEL PLAYLIST?
I don't have any. I listen to whatever is being played by the local people, especially by the drivers, when we are in a tour or a public bus. Usually the drivers will switch the radio to the English station for me, but I always tell them to put it back to their local station. It is very nice to listen to their local music because it makes me feel part of their world.

WHERE ARE YOU TRAVELING TO NEXT?
We are going back to **Peru** to tick off my husband's bucket list items of setting foot upon **Machu Picchu** and flying over the **Nazca Lines**. For fairness' sake, we are also going back to **Brazil** to tick off something from my bucket list, and that would be seeing the **Iguazu Falls** and walking on the sand dunes of **Lençóis Maranhenses National Park**.

JAMIE LUY

Credit Risk Analyst and Travel Blogger

Frolicked in the salt flats of Bolivia on page 74

FLORIAN EFINGER

Nomad

Explored the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on page 62

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE VISIT THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS IN INDIA?
There are plenty of undiscovered and remote places in the Andaman that are too beautiful for words. You have to check them out yourselves.

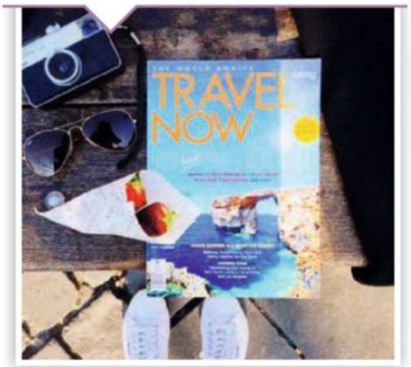
WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR OUTDOOR TRAVEL ESSENTIALS?
I don't really consider anything a must-have when I travel outdoors but I always check the weather because hiking in the mountains for example, can get quite dangerous. The mountains will not move but you only have one life so I don't risk anything when the weather is bad.

WHAT'S ON YOUR TRAVEL PLAYLIST?
Mostly slow house sets because I just love them. There is a special song that I listen to whenever I leave an airplane and enter the terminal. It's called "Madeleine" by Konstantin Sibold.

WHERE ARE YOU TRAVELING TO NEXT?
Around the **Philippines**! I love the people, and the fact that so many unexpected things happen when I'm in this country makes it more exciting.

Delsey is available at Delsey stores located in Ayala Center Cebu, Ayala Fairview Terraces and SM City Davao,
The Travel Club, Flight 001 and leading department stores nationwide. Delsey is Exclusively distributed by the Primer Group of Companies.

WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE



One of our favorite travel must-haves? @travelnowmagazine of course! We'll be reading this *en route* to Amsterdam. Don't forget to get your own copy this month!
accesstravelph

It feels so good that I can just read anything and everything about traveling and not feel guilty because it's now part of my work and my purpose.
thetraveltagger

Thank you @travelnowmagazine for featuring some of my photos! Though I just came back from a trip, you once again ignited the wanderlust in me! **i_bkf**

Despite all the hassle that life brings us, it's good that there's always something to remind us to live a happy and positive life. Learn how travel has inspired us to start @thehappyprojectph in @travelnowmagazine's March - April issue. Thank you for believing in us and for this generous full page feature! Such an honor!
thehappyprojectph

Now I can read my favorite travel magazine in Greece, where I am for the next few days. Happy that #TravelNow magazine can be subscribed to digitally via Magzter (download through the Apple App Store or Google Play)
erronocampo

*Answers have been edited for length and clarity

WINNERS

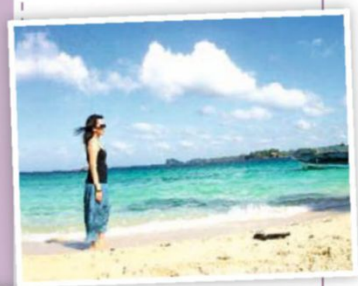
Congratulations to **Luningning Queano** for winning a P5000 gift pack from **Sunplay**!

"My favorite summer getaway is Singapore and Malaysia. These countries have so much to offer for my three boys Lance, Lucas, and Lewis. There are countless amusement parks, including Universal Studios and Legoland!"

Hooray, **Jackie Barquin** wins a **Happy Pouch**!

"Traveling makes me very happy because I get to experience the culture of the places I am in. I am also able to step out of my comfort zone, and in doing so, I discover something new in myself every time I travel."

You win P2000 worth of gift certificates from **SM Accessories**, **Patricia Rosales**!



"My travel essentials include lotion so I can moisturize my skin, sunnies so I can glam up any outfit while protecting my eyes from the sun and wind, and my phone, which is also my camera, map, notepad, and alarm clock."

Send us an email at <travelnow@onemegagroup.com> for instructions on how to claim your prize.

WIN!

- Get a chance to win a **20L Dry Bag** from **Tactics**! Just answer this: What's the one thing you can't go on a beach trip without?
- Tell us what beach you're dying to go to and why and you might just score yourself a new bathing suit from **I Love Koi**!
- Win one of **10 pairs of sunglasses** from **SM Accessories**! Just share with us your most memorable outdoor adventure.
- You may also win a **DIY Kit** from **Aloe Cure Philippines**. Write us how you take care of your skin while traveling.

Email your answers along with a high-res (at least 1MB) photo of you in one of your travels to <travelnow@onemegagroup.com>. Put in the subject box the prize you want to win. Deadline of entries is May 31, 2015.

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE YOU?
Love taking travel photos? Get them featured in TRAVEL NOW Magazine!
Tag us on Instagram (@TravelNowMagazine) and add the hashtag #TravelNow so we can see, share, and publish them!

CONNECT WITH US!

SEND US AN EMAIL! **<travelnow@onemegagroup.com>** ADD US ON FACEBOOK! **<facebook.com/TravelNowMagazine>**
TWEET US! **(@TravelNowMag)** FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM! **(@TravelNowMagazine)**

Take Off

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW AND BRING WHEN YOU TRAVEL

The Quan Spa at Marriott Hotel Manila

TRAVEL NOW

"Quan Spa is quite the experience. Bigger than many local spas, it's the unobtrusive professionalism of the staff and their sensitivity to your needs and minor discomforts that take the experience to world-class levels."

NOT SO FAR FROM HOME
PAGE 36

Explore the walled city of Intramuros with Manila For A Day

STEPS IN THE CITY

Travel doesn't always have to be to somewhere far away. Here are two historical local tours in (or near) the metro that you can take part of

compiled by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of SUN CRUISES *and* MANILA FOR A DAY
additional photos by BOB CORAN

CRUISE TO THE ISLAND OF CORREGIDOR

Corregidor is a place rich in history and the island's location 48 kilometers west of Manila makes it the ideal location for a day or overnight trip. Its location also made it the perfect first line of defense for Manila, and during its heyday had several military installations that were used during World War II. The remaining structures of the old fortresses and the rugged outdoor landscape provide breathtaking views and Instagram-worthy sights that are guaranteed to delight snap-happy adventurers. The best spot to watch (and capture on camera!) the sunset is at Battery Grubbs, where one of the disappearing guns can still be seen overlooking the peninsula.

The island is also a haven for adrenaline junkies, as it offers many outdoor activities, including hiking through the forests, hillsides, and ruins, ATV riding, biking (remember to bring your own bike!), ziplining, and kayaking. More laid-back visitors can try bird-watching or rock balancing.

The ruins of the fortresses make for a majestic background for bike rides

You may also play a game of Frisbee in Corregidor

Sun Cruises operates the historical tour and adventure packages at Corregidor Island. For bookings and reservations, phone (+63 2) 834 6857, (+63 2) 832 8140, (+63 917) 513 2625, or (+63 922) 337 0068, email <sales@suncruises.com.ph>, or visit <suncruises.com.ph>

1 Don't forget to wear comfortable shoes for your walking tour **2** Your tour guide will educate you about Intramuros landmarks including the San Agustin Church

TRAVEL BACK IN TIME IN INTRAMUROS

For a refresher on the history of the Philippines under Spanish rule, book a tour with **Manila For A Day**. Though barely two years old, the company prides itself in its ability to provide its guests an academically fulfilling but still enjoyable tour. To ensure the quality of their tours, the size of the tour groups are limited. At the helm is Dustin Ancheta, who used to work for the Department of Tourism and has professional training in different guiding programs. Dustin has personally guided VIP guests, including the Queen of Spain.

Their signature program is called the **3G: God, Gold, and Glory Tour**. The tour is essentially that of Intramuros and siginificant sites in the area including the San Agustin Church, Casa Manila, and the Manila Collectible Company.

A private tour will cost you P1200 per person with a minimum of five people, but smaller groups who prefer a more intimate tour can still book one, as long as they pay the difference. This fee includes all the entrance fees, guiding fees, snacks, and refreshments.

Other tours offered by Manila For a Day include 3GX: God, Gold, and Glory Tour Extended, Culture Café, and National Treasures.

For bookings and reservations, phone (+63 939) 397 6478 or (+63 999) 196 4715, email them at <tours@manilaforaday.com>, or visit <manilaforaday.com>

WELCOME TO

THE HEART OF DAVAO

Take in the aroma of nature's abundance.

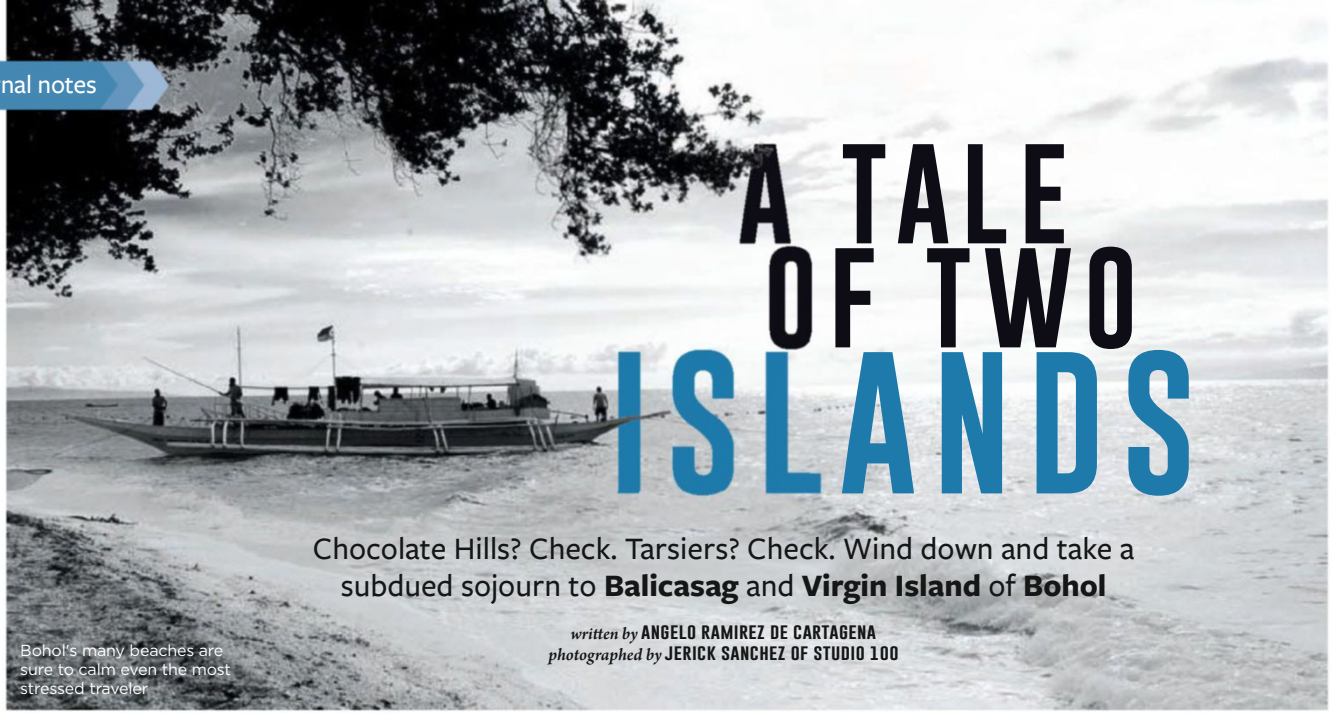
Marco Polo Davao prides itself in having Lazuli Spa, a world-class spa center. This refuge for the body offers a variety of treatments perfect for couples or travelers wanting to relax and escape the city hustle and bustle. Find the true scent of relaxation in Lazuli Spa, offered exclusively by Marco Polo Davao.

This is Marco Polo, the Heart of Davao.

Visit www.marcopolohotels.com to secure your booking

www.marcopolohotels.com www.facebook.com/marcopolodavaohotel www.twitter.com/marcopolodavao

MARCO POLO DAVAO



A TALE OF TWO ISLANDS

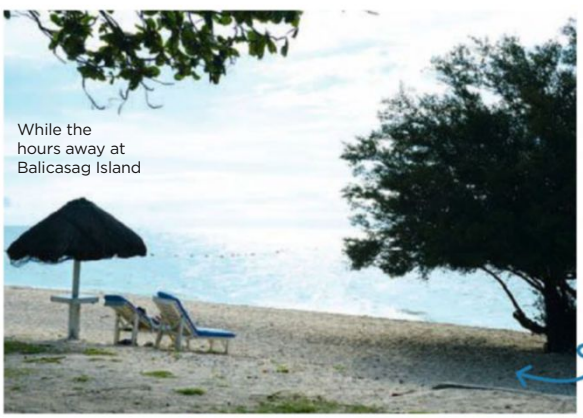
Chocolate Hills? Check. Tarsiers? Check. Wind down and take a subdued sojourn to **Balicasag** and **Virgin Island** of **Bohol**

written by ANGELO RAMIREZ DE CARTAGENA
photographed by JERICK SANCHEZ OF STUDIO 100

Bohol's many beaches are sure to calm even the most stressed traveler

Much has been written about the tropical wonder that is **Bohol**. The calm and languid province calls to mind vivid imageries of lush greens, generous stretches of undisturbed powdery sand, and an endless sea of crystalline blues seemingly sparkling as it catches the light.

There is more to the island than the much studied and photographed (obligatory tourist shots, of course) sprawling Chocolate Hills and tarsiers. Not quite a hop and skip as much as it as 30 to 45 minute boat ride from the pop culture override that is Alona beach (geographically listed as Tawala, the small stretch of paradise was named after 80s actress, Alona Alegre), take to the sea and head over to breathtaking respites in the form of two islands—**Balicasag** and **Virgin Island**.



While the hours away at Balicasag Island

BEGIN WITH BALICASAG

If you remembered to pack your steely discipline on your Bohol getaway then chances are, you will be able to be up at around an ungodly 6 AM to set out to the island day tour and greet the day with the dolphins. Yes, dolphins.

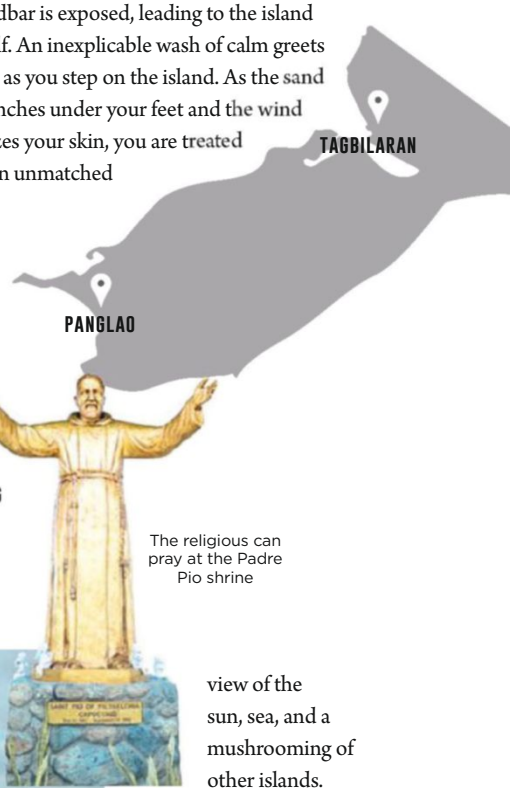
However, we didn't quite wake up on time so sadly, dolphins were out of the question. Fear not, as Balicasag promises an experience like no other. The small, almost circular island is one of the finest diving and snorkeling sites and declared marine sanctuary this side of the Pacific. After getting lost in a whole new world under the sea, set out to the pristinely white sand bar framed by a sprucing of bougainvillea flowers and palm trees and have your lunch or *merienda* of sandwiches, *halo-halo*, and (in our case) piña colada, with the ocean as your view.

Walk along Pungtod Island's long sandbar during low tide

NOT SO LONELY HOUR

As the golden hour teased from a little above the horizon, it was time to set sail to the glorious oasis that is Pungtod Island, or as the locals have appropriately called it, Virgin Island.

During low tide, a beautiful white powdery sandbar is exposed, leading to the island itself. An inexplicable wash of calm greets you as you step on the island. As the sand crunches under your feet and the wind grazes your skin, you are treated to an unmatched view of the sun, sea, and a mushrooming of other islands.



The religious can pray at the Padre Pio shrine

For the spiritual, there stands a Padre Pio shrine where you can have a quiet moment and pray.

PIECE OF HEAVEN

This may not be your usual summer sojourn to Bohol. Tick the typicals off your bucket list (for first timers) and enjoy a more subdued, relaxed, and ultimately refreshing trip around this little piece of heaven.

The Luxury of Sanctuary

A sweeping panoramic ocean view bordered by a 250-meter private beachfront. A haven where the world's most beautiful people go to relax, sitting amongst the tranquil breezes that blow around Panglao Island, Bohol.

Experience a luxury of sanctuary with the coastal charm of The Bellevue Resort.

THE BELLEVUE RESORT
BOHOL, PHILIPPINES

2014 TRAVELLERS' CHOICE tripadvisor
TOP 10 HOTELS FOR FAMILIES IN THE PHILIPPINES
THE BELLEVUE RESORT

2014 TRAVELLERS' CHOICE tripadvisor
TOP 25 HOTELS IN THE PHILIPPINES
THE BELLEVUE RESORT

BARANGAY DOLJO, PANGLAO ISLAND, BOHOL, PHILIPPINES 6340

T : (6338) 422.2222 BOHOL | T : (632) 771.8181 MANILA | F : (6338) 422.2202

WWW.THEBELLEVUE.COM

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

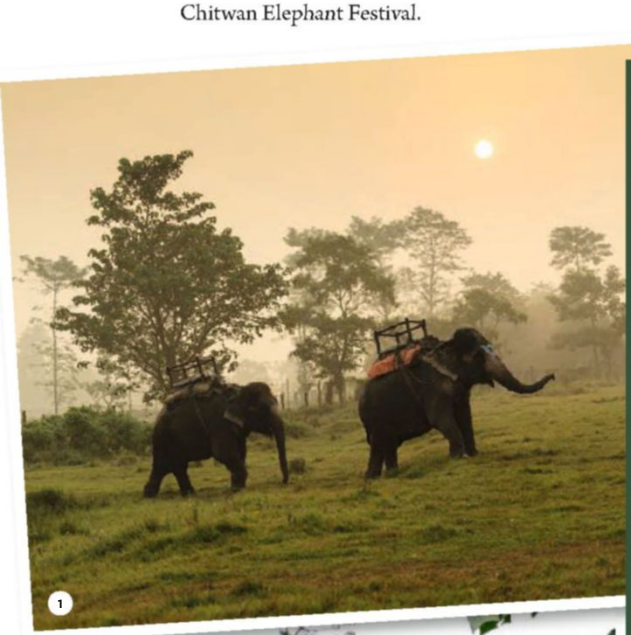
Looking for that next great escapade? You don't have to search far and wide to get your fix—here are four fresh destinations found right here in Asia, plus suggestions on where to stay

photos courtesy of AGODA.COM
additional photo courtesy of SYMMETRY.MIND *via* FLICKR

See the elephants frolic in Chitwan National Park

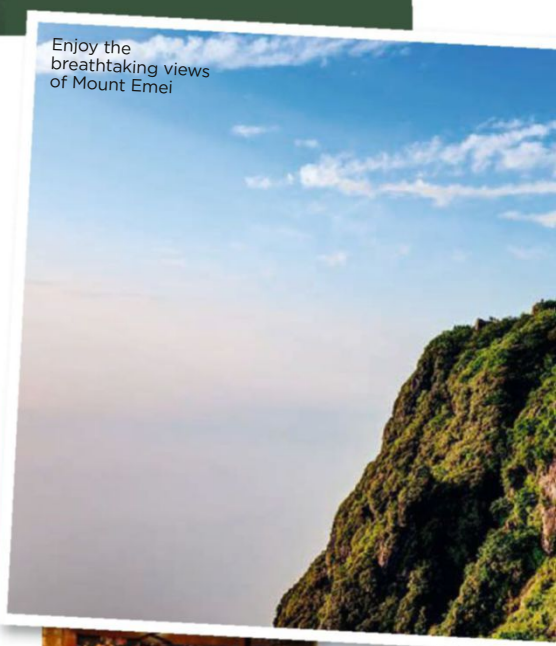
CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK, NEPAL

Nepal's first national park is a four-hour bus ride away from Kathmandu. Located southwest of the capital, the park plays host to a number of jungles, grasslands, and rivers, all home to endangered species. You can spot rhinos, elephants, monkeys, crocodiles, and different kinds of birds here, and if you're lucky, you might even see a Bengal tiger. For good weather, go from October to February, and if you can, schedule your trip to coincide with the annual Chitwan Elephant Festival.



1 Animal lovers will enjoy staying at Hotel Sapana Village Lodge Chitwan
2 The lodge has many tour operations in the park

WHERE TO STAY
Hotel Sapana Village Lodge Chitwan
ADDRESS Sauraha-2 Chitwan Nepal, Chitwan National Park
REVIEW SCORE Fantastic (8.5)
CUSTOMER REVIEW
"My friend recommended this lodge and I'm glad we booked it! We enjoyed our stay. The staff were all lovely and attentive. The location is beautiful. A haven away from all the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu. The rooms were basic but clean. The restaurant had a good selection of food. There are some elephants at the lodge so it was great to watch them bathe in the lake while having breakfast. The hotel offers a range of tour operations at Chitwan National Park."
-Couple traveler from United Kingdom



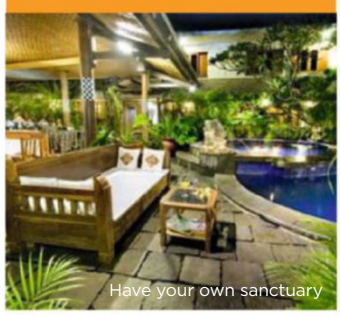
Enjoy the breathtaking views of Mount Emei

Feel at home even in the mountains

WHERE TO STAY
Mount Emei Teddy Bear Hotel
ADDRESS Number 43 Baoguosi, Eshanzhen, Mount Emei, China
REVIEW SCORE Fantastic (8.5)
CUSTOMER REVIEW
"Comfortable beds in the hotel. They provide basic necessities for travelers going up to Mount Emei."
-Group traveler from Malaysia

COMPILED BY KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO

WHERE TO STAY
Nyiur Indah Beach Hotel
ADDRESS Jl.Pantai Barat Pananjung Number 46 , Pantai Barat, Pangandaran, Indonesia
REVIEW SCORE Fantastic (8.7)
CUSTOMER REVIEW
"Perfect. Far exceeded expectations, and made our time in Pangandaran memorable and special."
-Group traveler from Canada


Have your own sanctuary

PANGANDARAN, INDONESIA

This fishing village is located in Java, 200 kilometers away from the city of Bandung. A lot less developed compared to the more popular Bali, Pangandaran nonetheless has a lot to offer. A bike ride across the countryside will give photographers plenty of opportunities to capture its sleepy villages and imposing palm trees, while surfers can try their hands at the waves south of the town. Hikers can head to Pangandaran National Park and explore the Green Canyon. If you're still looking for that adrenaline rush, you can raft through its emerald rivers. Avoid the rains and book a trip between April and September.

Snap Instagram-worthy photos in Pangandaran

MOUNT EMEI, CHINA

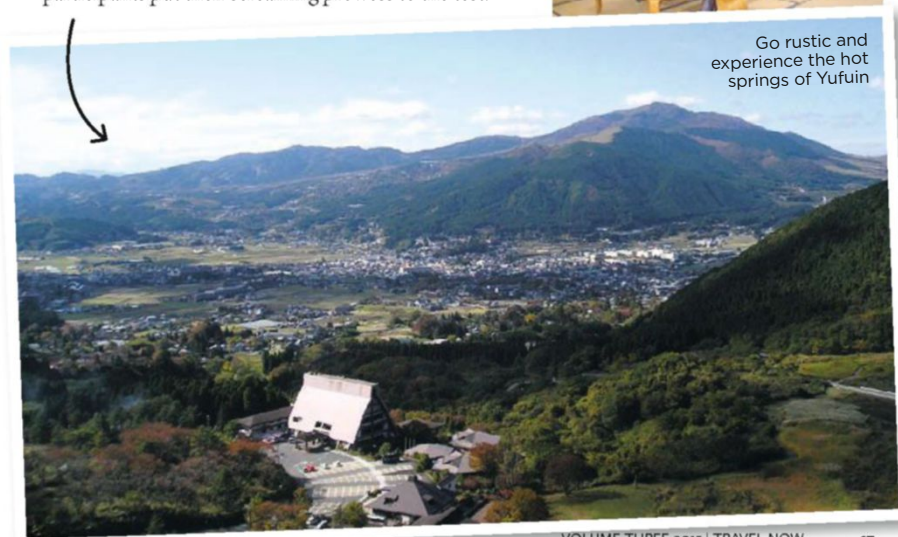
This mountainous UNESCO World Heritage Site in the province of Sichuan is famous for its picturesque cliffs, valleys, and temples. The first Buddhist temple in China is said to have been built here 2000 years ago, but now visitors can explore over 100 in the area. Treks can be moderate to challenging, but those who prefer to take a relaxed route can go up via cable cars. Don't leave without visiting the Leshan Grand Buddha. A visit in April to October is ideal, and in May, visitors can witness the international Buddhist festival where monks from all over the world come to celebrate.

YUFUIN, JAPAN

Avoid the crowds and go to off-the-radar Yufuin to experience the hot springs of Japan. It has three notable hot springs: Yufuin Hot Springs, Yunohira Hot Springs, and Tsukuhara Hot Springs. Yufuin has the second highest water flow in Japan and offers a spectacular view of the town and the surrounding hills. Yunohira is said to effectively treat gastrointestinal complications, while Tsukuhara is recommended for those with skin problems. Post soak, go on a shopping trip through the district's narrow streets, or have coffee while taking in a view of Lake Kinrinko. Too easy for you? Hike up Mount Yufu for a grander view. There's nothing quite like experiencing the hot springs in winter, but if you're up for quirky festivals, go in October and attend the Yufuin Beef-Eating Screaming Competition, where participants put their screaming prowess to the test.

WHERE TO STAY
Enokiya Ryokan
ADDRESS 1086-2 Kawakami, Yufu, Yufuin, Japan
REVIEW SCORE Fantastic (8.5)
CUSTOMER REVIEW
"The hotel is nice and clean. The room was well-lit. The hotel location is convenient to everything. Room rates are very reasonable. I really enjoyed my stay."
-Group traveler from Taiwan

The hotel's location is a plus for travelers


Go rustic and experience the hot springs of Yufuin

GOOD TO GO

Going off on an adventure? Make sure you've ticked all of these off your list before you leave the house

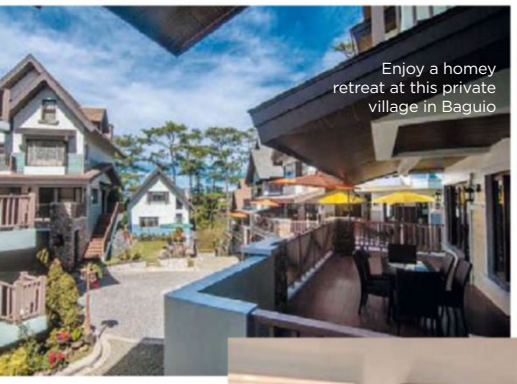
compiled by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of UPPER HOUSE VILLAGE, SUPERGA, RAY-BAN, R2R, BEBEBALM, SKECHERS, *and* SHISEIDO

Finish an outfit's look with Ray-ban's Denim Wayfarers

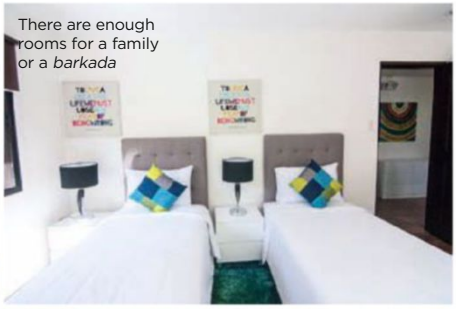
A TRUSTY PAIR OF SUNGLASSES

Whether you're going to the beach, the mountains, or even just an urban jungle, you need to protect your eyes from the sun's harsh rays. **Ray-Ban**'s denim wayfarers are the perfect outdoor buddy as it marries two classics: the wayfarers and rugged denim. Made out of five layers of 100% polypropylene-coated ultra strong denim, this pair is sturdy but comfortable, and the different colors allow you to mix and match with whatever outfit you're wearing.

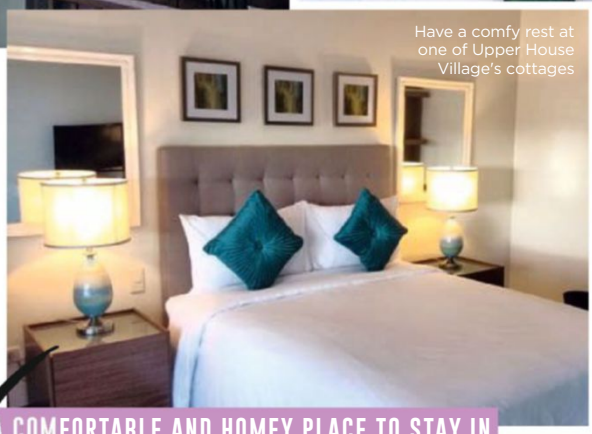
For more information, visit <ray-ban.com>



Enjoy a homey retreat at this private village in Baguio



There are enough rooms for a family or a *barkada*



Have a comfy rest at one of Upper House Village's cottages

A COMFORTABLE AND HOMEY PLACE TO STAY IN

Are hotel rooms lacking that homey vibe that you want on your trip? Short of owning your own vacation house, your best bet is booking a cottage at **Upper House Village** in Baguio. Located between Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay, the village has 12 serviced cottages and each can house groups of up to 14 people, making it perfect for family or *barkada* getaways.

Each cottage comes fully furnished and is made up of five bedrooms with private bathrooms each, an attic lounge, a playroom, a dining room, and a well-equipped kitchen, ensuring that there's space for everyone, even those in the group that would need privacy from time to time. The houses also have a fireplace, outdoor porches and balconies, and a two-car garage. Dying to update everyone about your vacation? Each cottage comes with free WiFi connection, so you can surf and post to your heart's content. While guests can relax inside their modern accommodations, outside it's a different scene—lush greeneries and restful views await.

Upper House Village is located at 88 Paterno Street South Drive, Baguio City. For more information, visit <upperhousebaguio.com>

A HANDY ALL-AROUND MOISTURIZER

As much as we want to bring all our toiletries with us on our trips, we also have to allot some precious luggage space for other travel essentials too. In comes **Bebebalm** and **Bebebugs** moisturizing sticks. These sticks can relieve discomfort caused by sunburn, chapped lips, blisters, itchy rashes, and insect bites (it also doubles as an insect repellant!). It can also be used for general moisturization of the face, hands, and feet.

For more information, visit <bebebalm.com/philippines>

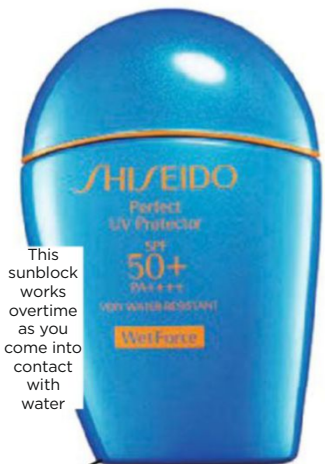
Bebebalm gives you extreme moisturization in a stick

A DURABLE TRAVEL BAG

R2R has recently launched **Viaje**, and like the name suggests, the collection is perfect for avid travelers. Like all R2R bags, Viaje bags are crafted by urban artisans from different local communities in the Philippines, including the Mangyan tribe from Oriental Mindoro. Each bag in the collection also has its own personality: the Lia is for overpackers, the Christine is for the fashionista, the Patricia is for those who like reinventing themselves, the Cecilia is for the luxe traveler, while Mikka is for the playful adventurer.

For more information, visit <viaje.rags2riches.ph>

Purchasing Viaje bags from R2R will also help some local communities



This sunblock works overtime as you come into contact with water

A HIGH-SPF SUNSCREEN

Shiseido has recently unveiled its newest **Perfect UV Protector SPF 50+ Sunblock**, which uses Wet Force technology to make it extra water-resistant. This means that after application, the sunblock won't wash off due to water or sweat—instead, it will actually boost its protective strength up to 124%! What's more, sunburns as a result of uneven application of sunscreen will also be prevented, as the SuperVeil-UV 360 technology forms a uniform UV protective veil over the entire skin. Don't worry about residue though, as it can easily be removed using regular soap.

For more information, visit <shiseido.com>

A COUPLE OF PAIRS OF RELIABLE SHOES

Don't let the looks of the **Superga 2750** shoes fool you—the iconic vulcanized shoes are sturdy enough to keep up with your adventures. The new collection for 2015 ensures that there's a Superga for everyone, no matter their lifestyle. The City Collection is perfect for casual and leisurely travelers, the Sports Collection fits those with very active lifestyles, while the Country Collection best fits those who call the outdoors their home.

Superga branches are located at Greenbelt 5, Rustan's Makati, Rustan's Tower Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Rustan's Alabang Town Center, Central Square BHS, SM Mall of Asia, Robinsons Magnolia, Blue Bay Walk, Fairview Terraces, and Estancia. For more information, like them on SupergaPH

Look stylish without sacrificing comfort with Superga Shoes

For those seeking comfort while they explore city streets, try the **Skechers GOwalk 3**. The latest from the GOwalk series features the Goga Mat Technology, which cushions your feet, ensuring that every step is your most comfortable. It is also fitted with GOimpulse and GO Pillar sensors that give you more flexibility with your strides. Bonus: each pair is also fitted with Memory Form Fit, which adapts to your heel and gives it all the support it needs.

Skechers branches are located at Glorietta 2, Trinoma, Ayala Fairview Terraces, SM North Edsa, SM Mall of Asia, Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Place Manila, Gateway Mall, Lucky Chinatown, Market! Market!, Festival Mall, SM Fairview, SM Dasmariñas, Paseo Sta. Rosa, Marquee Mall, SM Pampanga, SM Clark, Ayala Center Cebu, SM City Cebu, SM Davao, Centrio Mall Cagayan de Oro, and LimKetKai Mall CDO. For more information, like them on SkechersPhilippines or follow them on SkechersPH, and SkechersPH

The new Skechers GOwalk 3 is perfect for city strolls

Let the new technology of Skechers embrace your feet

Miguel's background in the real estate industry was helpful to his missions

BACK TO ZERO

One man quit his job and rebuilt a town from rubble with the help of friends, social media, and lots of inspiration

written and photographed by MERIAM OTARRA
additional photos courtesy of MIGUEL RIVERA

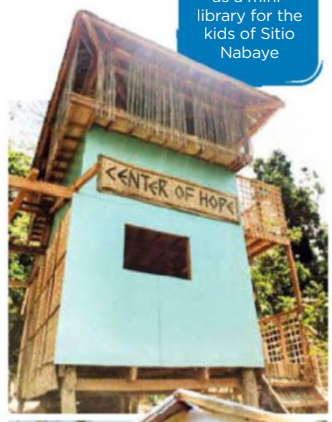
A year of unemployment was the change **Miguel Rivera** needed to do what he has always wanted to do. From the genuine intention of helping people, he created a team composed of his friends to help him complete a mission he believed was more important than climbing the career ladder. What he now calls **Team HOPE** (Helping Other People Endure) is an actualization of his passion to never stop caring and never stop helping.

SITIO NABAYE

When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, Miguel had just quit his job of ten years. While the rest of the world concentrated on Tacloban, some of the areas in the western part of Visayas were almost forgotten. Miguel started a campaign to rebuild the houses on one of Team HOPE's first beneficiaries: a town of around 35 families in north Iloilo called Sitio Nabaye.

Like other areas affected by Typhoon Haiyan, Sitio Nabaye was leveled to the ground. This meant the team had no place to sleep except for the beach, which they had to share with sandflies. "The first three months were difficult," says Miguel. They even had to transport 1000 pieces of galvanised iron sheets and more than 800 pieces of plywood from the main port of Estancia on a small pump boat that can only accommodate up to three people.

In the last seven legs of the operation, Miguel brought friends and volunteers from here and abroad to help him with his mission. One time they even had a total of 16 volunteers in one leg. More than completing the task, he has also made sure that friendships were being built. The volunteers sometimes go on a side trip to nearby Isla Gigantes after working hard for weeks in Nabaye.



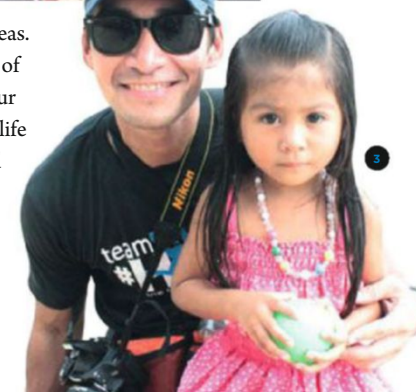
The Center of HOPE was built to serve as a mini-library for the kids of Sitio Nabaye

MORE MISSIONS

Now, Sitio Nabaye has a two-floor learning and feeding facility for kids called Center of HOPE, 35 houses built, four fishing boats, one school boat, a chapel, 20 water filters, and two renovated classrooms. After seven legs of mission, Miguel has decided to look after their family business while still continuing to help people in different areas. "The kind-hearted people of Nabaye have unchained our shackles from a mundane life we once lived and allowed us to find ourselves." Miguel says that at the end of the day, it is not the community that the volunteers are helping—it's the other way around.

Team HOPE's next mission is to raise funds to rebuild a school in Eastern Samar that was also devastated by the typhoon. It seems like a smaller task to accomplish compared to a whole town, but here's the catch—the school is situated on a mountain and is only accessible by a two-hour carabao ride. Logistically speaking, it sounds impossible, but Miguel is optimistic Team HOPE will be able to fulfill this before school starts on June.

Follow them on TeamHOPEManila



1 One of the houses built by the volunteers in Sitio Nabaye
2 Miguel and some volunteers enjoying the view from the top of Cabugao Island in Isla Gigantes
3 Miguel finds joy in making friends with the locals

HALLO NORGE!

Norwegian Ambassador **Erik Førner** talks to **TRAVEL NOW** and shares his first impressions on the Philippines and reveals the surprising things we have in common with **Norway**

interview by MARBEE SHING-GO
photographed by JOHN OCAMPO *of* STUDIO 100

Despite hailing from a country known for its cold weather (and those majestic fjords, of course), **Ambassador Erik Førner** of Norway and his wife, Sille, are unreservedly warm and welcoming. When asked to talk about the things they love about the Philippines, the Ambassador replies, "Friendly people, nature, the islands, beaches, and the climate." Although he admits to missing Norway's cool fresh air and going skiing, the Ambassador is looking forward to exploring his newest post, saying that he and his wife have already planned trips to Boracay and Bohol and have a bucket list of more things to do, including visiting Palawan and Baguio and swimming with the whale sharks.

A veteran in foreign service, Ambassador Erik Førner previously served in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Project Director and Deputy Director General. He also worked in various distinguished capacities in the Royal Norwegian Embassies in Sweden, Germany (where he met his wife), and Austria. Although this is his first posting in Asia, the Ambassador remarks that he's already noticed several similarities between the Philippines and Norway. "We also eat, for example, pork as you do," he says, referring to the *ribbe* (roast pork rib), which is remarkably similar to the Philippine *lechon* and is a staple in Norwegian Christmas dinners. "And of course fish," he continues, "Because seafood is big in Norway." He adds, "I think if you look at nature, sometimes it looks very much the same. Because you have the islands and then we have the vegetation on the islands… it's green and sometimes you have a picture taken in the Philippines and I say, this could be Norway!"

envoy's key

Winter's most beautiful display of lights, the Aurora Borealis

Modern architecture in Finnmark

WHAT IS NORWAY BEST KNOWN FOR AND WHY IS IT WORTH THE LONG TRIP FROM THE PHILIPPINES?

Norwegian Fjords Hikers will love the western part of Norway, which is famous for its fjords and mountains. One shouldn't miss the UNESCO World Heritage Site Geirangerfjord, with its impressive waterfalls and villages that mark the start and end of the snake-like profile of this unique fjord.

Lofoten Islands Considered one of the best places in the world to see the Northern Lights, the islands are also known for fishing and whale safaris.

The Northern Lights / Aurora Borealis Nature's most jaw-dropping light show, a mystical experience like this is not to be missed while in Scandinavia. Head to northern Norway or Svalbard between late autumn and early spring for the best chances of seeing the lights.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF **GURI DAHL** (LUTEFISK), **ØYVIND HEEN** (GUDBRANDSJUVET AND BORGUND) AND **JOHAN WILDHAGEN** (FINNMARK) VIA VISITNORWAY.COM, **TORE NEDREBØ** (ØYER AND JOTUNHEIMEN) VIA MFA, AND **ORSOLYA HAARBERG** (NORTHERN LIGHTS), **BRUNO MAZODIER/ SOLO SYNDICATION** (SVALBARD) AND **KAI JENSEN** (NATIONAL DAY) VIA NTB SCANPIX

WHAT ARE THE KEY DESTINATIONS THAT YOU RECOMMEND?

FOR FIRST TIME TOURISTS/TRAVELERS

Oslo While the capital is modern and bustling, it is not hard to go on a hike in the forest or swim in the fjords without having to go far.

Bergen Bergen is one of the best-known and well-maintained medieval city settlements in Norway. Not only is it the gateway to the fjords of Norway, it also offers a variety of activities ranging from theater to sports.

Fjords Norway has a long list of UNESCO World Heritage fjords. The longest and deepest one is the Sognefjord, which extends more than 200 kilometers inland to the foot of the Jotunheimen mountains.

North Cape / Nordkapp Known as Europe's northern end, Nordkapp is where the frigid waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean meet.

TRAVELERS RETURNING TO NORWAY

Tromsø

Tromsø is a lively and beautiful city packed with culture and history and surrounded by mountains, fjords, and islands, while also offering daring architecture, wildlife, science, and impressive vistas. The friendly locals will let you experience their lively nightlife with their range of restaurants.

Jotunheimen

Norway's highest mountain, Galdhøpiggen, can be found here. This area in Eastern Norway has the largest concentration of mountains higher than 6500 feet, not to mention the large number of waterfalls, rivers, lakes, glaciers, and valleys.

TOP THREE DESTINATIONS FOR A ROMANTIC GETAWAY

Hotel Union Øye

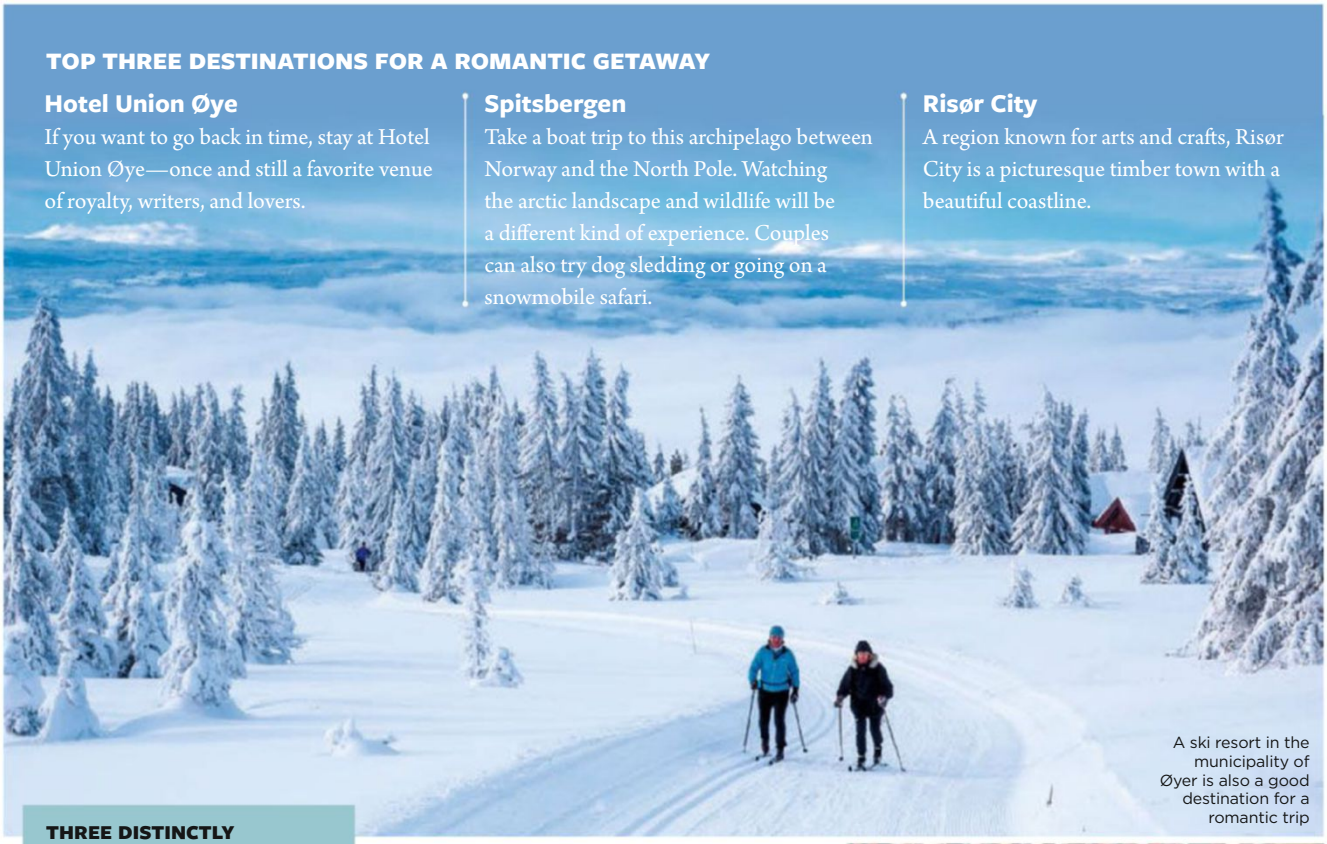
If you want to go back in time, stay at Hotel Union Øye—once and still a favorite venue of royalty, writers, and lovers.

Spitsbergen

Take a boat trip to this archipelago between Norway and the North Pole. Watching the arctic landscape and wildlife will be a different kind of experience. Couples can also try dog sledding or going on a snowmobile safari.

Risør City

A region known for arts and crafts, Risør City is a picturesque timber town with a beautiful coastline.



A ski resort in the municipality of Øyer is also a good destination for a romantic trip

THREE DISTINCTLY NORWEGIAN MUST-TRY DISHES

Lutefisk Stockfish that has been lying in water and lye (a way to preserve fish in the old days), then cooked in the oven. It is usually accompanied by potatoes, bacon, mushy peas, and mustard.

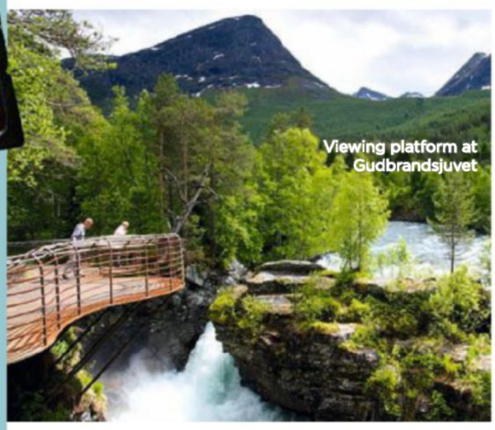
Smalahove Salted lamb's head that is sometimes smoked and dried and then boiled and served with mashed swedes and potatoes. This traditional feast from western Norway is served during autumn and Christmas.

Røkelaks Smoked salmon that is characterized by a distinctive mild salty taste, with the rawness still kept intact.

MUST-SEE FESTIVAL IN NORWAY

17th of May Norway's National Day and the celebration of the Norwegian constitution. The Norwegian Royal Family greets a procession of children from more than 100 schools from their balcony at the Royal Palace during the celebration.

Hundreds of school children parade the streets of Oslo during Norway's National Day



Viewing platform at Gudbrandsjuvet

THREE NORWEGIAN SOUVENIRS TO BRING HOME TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- **Traditional knitted jumper / Norwegian pullover**
- **Trolls**
- **Brown cheeses**

THINGS ABOUT NORWAY THAT ARE NORMALLY NOT FOUND IN GUIDEBOOKS

Traditional Boatlife Verdens ende, literally meaning "World's End," lies on the southernmost tip of Tjøme, 100 kilometers south of Oslo. With panoramic views of Skagerrak and a replica of an early type of lighthouse, *vippefyr*, the various rocks and islets surrounding it are breathtaking.

Nordmarka From the city center of Oslo, a quick ride by metro, bus, or tram takes you right into the virgin forests of Nordmarka. The seemingly endless gravel tracks are perfect for running.

Volunteer Organization (*Idrettslag*) Volunteer and non-profit groups facilitate activities related to sports and music for children.

Borgund is the most photographed stave church in Norway

SNAPSHOTS

Travel bloggers share their lists of bests from their favorite places all over the world

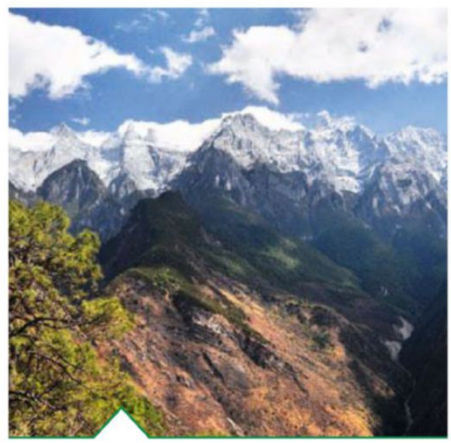
PAUL XYMON GARCIA

<walkflypinoy.com>
Writer and Researcher

HOI AN, VIETNAM

Best restaurant › Restaurant Bale Well
A small restaurant hidden along a small alleyway. They serve one and only one thing. Take your grilled meats, fresh vegetables, pickled vegetables, herbs, and fried spring roll, drizzle with thick peanut sauce, and wrap them all with rice paper. Do it. Now take a bite. Welcome to Hoi An.

Best dish › *Bún thit nuong*
More than *pho*, *bánh mì*, and *bún cha*, it's *bún thit nuong* that's my favorite. It's a salad of rice noodles, vegetables, herbs, and grilled meat. In Hanoi and Saigon, the dressing is fish sauce. Here in Hoi An, they use peanut sauce. Thick, full of spices, peanut sauce. Sold.



YUNNAN, CHINA

Best place to spend the night in › Halfway House
Trekking the high road involves spending a night at the gorge. The best mountain lodge to spend it in is Halfway House (which is really located at three-fourths of the trek). They offer room and board. Climb up to their viewing deck at sunset. The Himalayas tend to put on a light show like no other.

Best toilet in the trek › No. 1 Toilet in Heaven and Earth at the Halfway House
Travel presenter Michael Palin trekked this gorge for his BBC series and went to investigate the toilet baptized with the above name. It lived up to the hype. The toilet, while partitioned, is open-air so that you see Jade Dragon Snow Mountain as you attend to your important business.

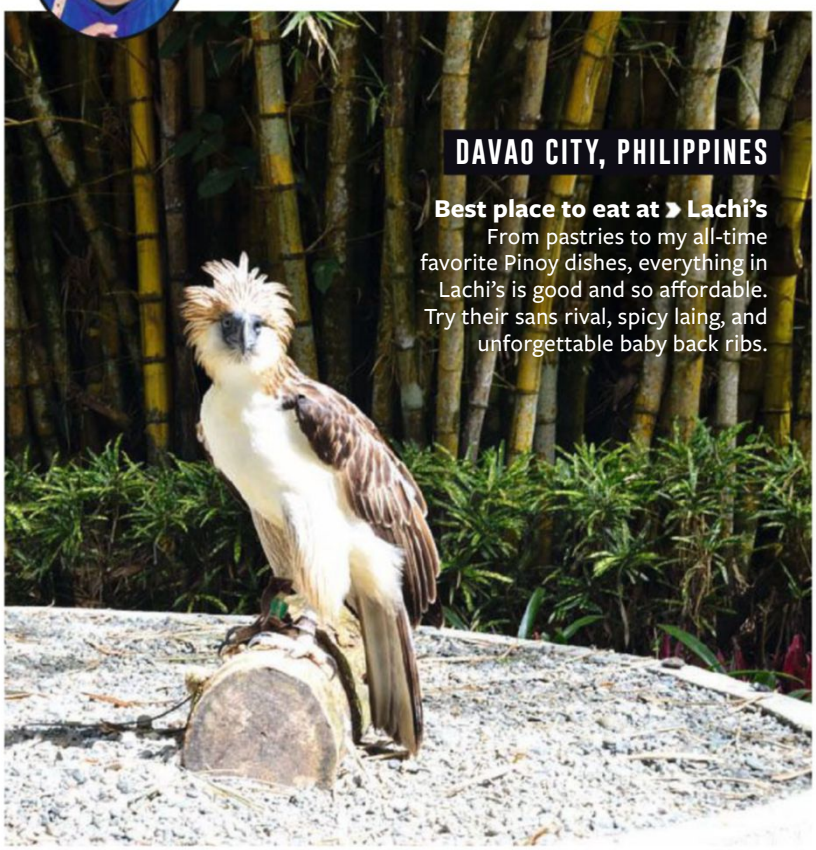
MAE HONG SON, THAILAND

Best views › Cave Lodge Sunrise Tour
In the cool season, a thick fog envelops the valley every morning. Cave Lodge drives guests to a high viewing point in the mountains, above the fog, where guests can view the sun slowly rising from behind a mountain, lighting the clouds below your feet and to the distance. Not to be missed.

Think you know the bests of a place? Send at least three photos (at least 1MB each) of your favorite destinations, your recommendations, plus a photo and a short description of yourself to <travelnow@onemegagroup.com>.

MELO VILLAREAL

<outoftownblog.com>
Travel Blogger and Photographer



DAVAO CITY, PHILIPPINES

Best place to eat at › Lachi's
From pastries to my all-time favorite Pinoy dishes, everything in Lachi's is good and so affordable. Try their sans rival, spicy laing, and unforgettable baby back ribs.

BATANES, PHILIPPINES

Best place to shop in › Honesty Coffee Shop
No one looks after the merchandise, so each customer is pretty much free to move inside the store. Everyone is expected to be honest—the store owners trust the people enough to allow them to list the products they bought along with their corresponding price and then leave the payment in a drop box.

Best place to visit › Racuh a Payaman
Fondly called as the Marlboro hills of Batanes, Racuh a Payaman in Mahatao is one of my favorite tourist stops in Batan Island. It has rolling hills covered with green grass and the beautiful ocean as a backdrop.

MONETTE FERNANDEZ

<fliptravels.com>
Freelancer

BERLIN, GERMANY

Best place to eat at › AlexOase at Alexanderplatz
This snack bar is in the middle of Alexanderplatz and is the best place to sample German currywurst, best paired with Berlin's local brew, Berliner. For less than EUR10, you get to sit back, relax, and revel as street artists perform nearby.

Best place to spend the afternoon in › East Side Gallery on Mühlenstraße
This is the longest remaining section of the fallen Berlin Wall, running 1.3 kilometers long. The gallery's over 100 paintings and graffiti by artists worldwide are a testament to what people can achieve to win back hope, change, and freedom under oppression.

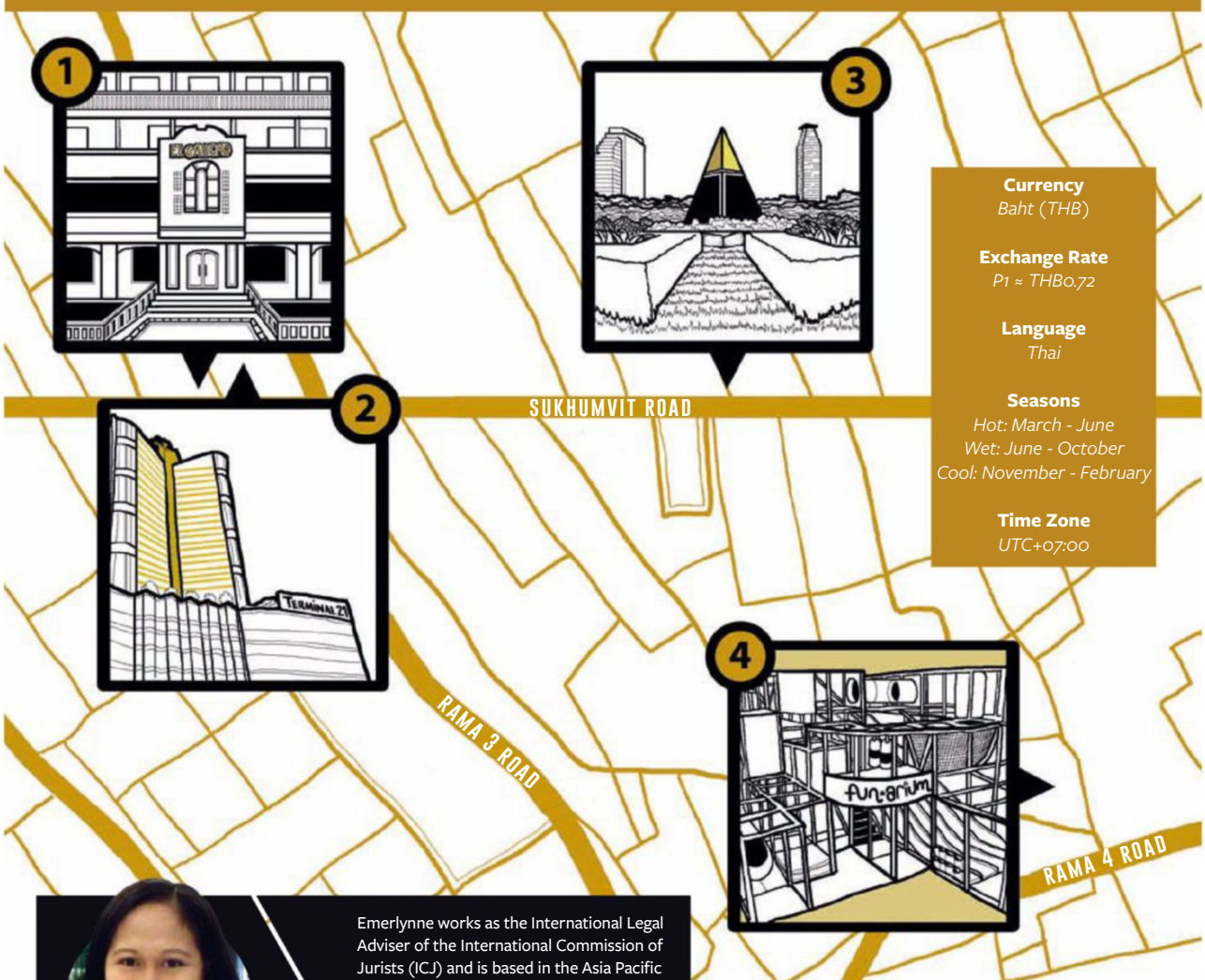
VARANASI, INDIA

Best activity › Hire a boat
Float along the Ganges River—one of the holiest places in Hinduism—at either sunrise or sunset for the most spectacular view of Varanasi. Ask the boatman to take you to one of the many burning *ghats* that line the river and see up-close the rituals involved in burning of the dead. In the evening, watch the *Aarti* or the ceremony of lights near Munshi Ghat.

BANGKOK FOR BABIES

Busy and neon-lighted Sukhumvit Road in **Bangkok** need not be too daunting to middle-aged flashpackers with babies and toddlers in tow. **Emerlynne Gil** shares how this city can be surprisingly kid-friendly, offering clean family fun for all ages

photographed by EMERLYNNE GIL
illustrated by LARA ESPINEDA



Currency
Baht (THB)

Exchange Rate
P1 ≈ THB0.72

Language
Thai

Seasons
Hot: March - June
Wet: June - October
Cool: November - February

Time Zone
UTC+07:00

about the insider
Emerlynne Gil, 40

Emerlynne works as the International Legal Adviser of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and is based in the Asia Pacific office of the organization in Bangkok. She has lived in Bangkok since 2007 and raises her two children there with her husband, John. Having just turned 40, Emerlynne considers herself way past backpacking holidays. She now just looks forward to hassle-free and toddler-friendly vacations with her young family.

1 **El Gaucho Argentinian Steakhouse**
2 **Terminal 21** 3 **Benjasiri Park**
4 **Funarium**

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS BY **KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO** (TERMINAL 21) AND **WEE SATAYAMAS** (BENJASIRI PARK) VIA FLICKR

FUNARIUM

111/1 Sukhumvit 26 Wattana
(+66 2) 665 6555
<funarium.co.th>

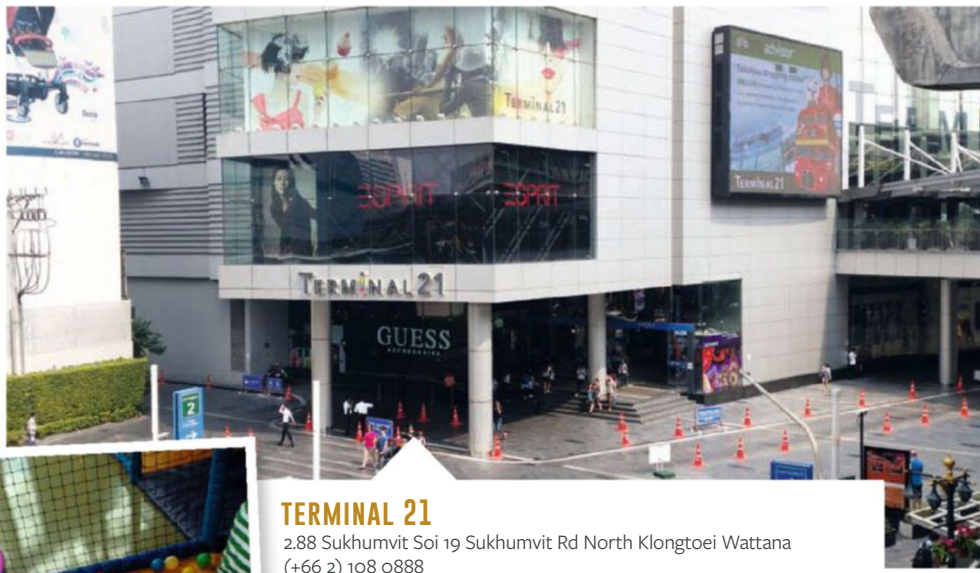
Children can really go crazy in this place, which is located along Sukhumvit Soi 26. Parents can unleash their restless toddlers and pre-teens in Funarium. Kids can shriek and jump around all they want within the air-conditioned 2000-square-meter facility. There are four types of play zones that cater to specific age groups. There is one for toddlers, where smaller children up to four years old can safely hurl themselves about the soft-play equipment. There are the junior, sports, and sand and water play zones for older children where they can go bonkers over the ball-blower machine, go around the rink in rollerblades, bicycles, or scooters, or jump about in the puddle pool.

Let your kids play at Funarium while you relax in the parents' area

While the children go wild, parents can enjoy really delicious food and drinks served at the Fun Café. Some parents check emails and do some work using the free WiFi while the kids are busy at play.

One of the best things for parents in Funarium is the massage corner. Tucked away behind the big slide, parents are stretched out, some slumbering peacefully, and having long and relaxing massages.

Admission fees for children range from THB200 to THB350 for three hours of play. Admission fee for adults is THB110.



TERMINAL 21

2.88 Sukhumvit Soi 19 Sukhumvit Rd North Klongtoei Wattana
(+66 2) 108 0888
<terminal21.co.th>

This place is for parents who want to go shopping but are overwhelmed by the thought of navigating a scooter with a bawling child around Chatuchak Market under the heat of the midday sun. This mall has nine floors with about 600 shops. One can find local designers' wares, including witty T-shirts and very hip jewelry. There are even some shops that sell vintage luxury designer bags. This mall is especially interesting because each floor is themed according to popular city destinations including Rome, Paris, San Francisco, and London. It is not yet as crowded as MBK mall and has a better selection of restaurants in case you get hungry while shopping. Also, unlike MBK mall, Terminal 21 has many elevators, which makes it easier to navigate with a stroller. It has newer and less crowded bathrooms too.

This mall can be conveniently accessed since there is a bridge that connects it directly to the BTS Asok station. You can also borrow a stroller for your baby or toddler from the mall's concierge just in case you didn't bring one.

BENJASIRI PARK

Sukhumvit Rd, Khlong Tan, Khlong Toei, Bangkok

If you would like to know how locals and their families unwind during the weekends, you can check out Benjasiri Park, which is located right along Sukhumvit Road, near the Phrom Phong BTS station, and right beside the Emporium mall. A man-made lake sits in the middle of the park. During weekends, locals and expats converge at the park to let their kids play on the swings and slides, chill on the well-maintained grass, or jog around the track. There are weekends when you would be lucky to chance upon an impromptu hula-hoop class where the instructor would most likely invite you and your children to try and learn new tricks for free. The atmosphere is very friendly and relaxed.

EL GAUCHO ARGENTINIAN STEAKHOUSE

8/1-7 Sukhumvit Soi 19, Sukhumvit Road North Klongtoey, Wattana
(+66 2) 255 2864
<elgaucho.asia>

Parents must have some quality couple time away from the kids. If you can find someone to watch over the children, you can steal away for a couple of hours and enjoy the most mouth-watering steaks at El Gaucho. If you cannot find someone you can trust enough to leave your kids with, then it is still alright to bring your children here. The restaurant will very kindly provide you with kiddie chairs and the menu is varied enough that you would also be able to find something to tempt even the pickiest eaters.

This place can be a bit pricey, but you will not regret eating here. The steaks are very tender, juicy, and seasoned perfectly. Prices of steaks range from THB1000 to THB6000.

You will also be pleasantly surprised with the bread they serve the steaks with. It is the most heavenly type of bread, one you will always dream of—crusty outside and warm and soft inside.

Always remember to make reservations for this place. It is often very crowded and those without reservations would have to wait at the bar or sit outside while waiting for a table.

START SPREADING THE NEWS

New York is now made more accessible to Filipinos with **Philippine Airlines**' four times a week flight from Manila

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photographed by JOHN JASON MOLINA
additional photo courtesy of PHILIPPINE AIRLINES

With PAL's new route, Lady Liberty is closer than ever!

Last March, to celebrate their 74th anniversary, **Philippine Airlines** resumed their Manila to New York flights. (The airline first flew to New York in 1996, but this service only lasted until 1997.) The 18.5-hour flight lands at John F. Kennedy International Airport, but has a stopover in Vancouver. PAL deliberately chose the JFK airport, as it is one of the busiest in the US and is near the center of New York.

The flight is scheduled four times a week (Flight PR126 departs from Manila every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday, arriving at New York the following day), making it the most direct and fastest way to get to the USA's East Coast from Manila. The Manila-Vancouver-New York flight will also be PAL's longest route at 14,501 kilometers.

With round trip economy tickets that can cost as low as $610, passengers will fly onboard the Airbus A340-300, which has 218 seats for economy class. The plane can also fit up to 36 passengers in business class. Round trip business class fares start at $3560.

"We are prioritizing our US network expansion, after the lifting of the Category 2 rating, in answer to the clamor of the huge Filipino community in the US East Coast," said PAL President Jaime J. Bautista. "We are confident that we will be able to meet the expectations of our passengers in New York with PAL's brand of quality service that is distinctively Filipino." With this route, PAL now has five US destinations (among 36 total international ports): New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Honolulu, and Guam.

PAL President Jaime J. Bautista was present at the inaugural flight

The inaugural flight was held on March 15, and Chairman Lucio C. Tan and President Jaime J. Bautista were present, along with other PAL executives. US Ambassador Philip Goldberg was also present during the send-off ceremony.

PAL's Flight PR 126 departs from NAIA Terminal 2 every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday at 11:50 PM. It arrives at Vancouver at 8:50 PM on the same day. The flight continues on to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport Terminal 1 and arrives at 7 AM the next day.

PR 127, the return flight, departs at 11 AM every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday and arrives in Vancouver at 1:50PM. The flight continues to Manila and lands at 8:35 PM the following day.

HUMA
ISLAND RESORT & SPA

*Fun*tastic Island Getaway

Experience this newest island destination with our
FUNtastic Island Getaway Promo starting at Php 27,336 net per person/night
(minimum of 2 nights, based on double occupancy).

The FUNtastic Island Getaway package comes with accommodation in a Water Villa, round trip sea plane transfers from Manila to Huma Island, full board gourmet dining, a 60-minutes signature massage in our glass-floored treatment rooms, a 30-minutes yoga session, complimentary use of kayak, snorkeling equipment, and use of resort facilities such as swimming pools, fitness center, kids club, library, and archery range. This premium offer is valid until September 30, 2015.

www.humaisland.com

Huma Island, Busuanga - Palawan, Philippines
Manila Sales Office: G/F Unit 104-106 Mile Long Building, Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City 1229
T: (+632) 553 0119 | F: (+632) 553 0121 | M: (+63) 906.3790864 | E: reservation@humaisland.com / inquiry@humaisland.com

ON CLOUD 10

After a decade, **WCC Aviation Company** is not only putting Binalonan, Pangasinan on the map, but making the Philippines known as a hub for globally competitive education in aviation

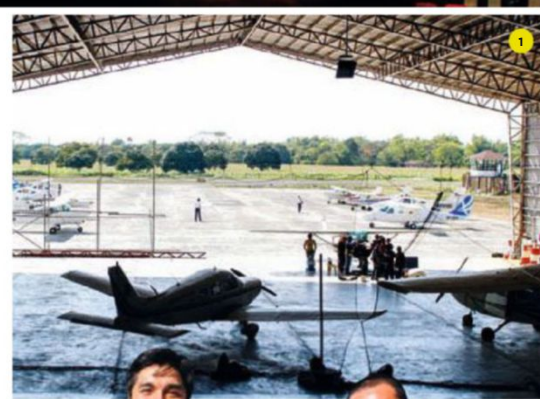
written by MERIAM OTARRA
photos courtesy of WCC AVIATION COMPANY

A WCC Aviation student operates the Alsim AL200 MCC

Binalonan, Pangasinan has long been known as a crossover town for people going to Baguio, but the quiet municipality is slowly making a name for itself. Driven by his passion for flying and the desire to provide the best aviation school, licensed pilot, college instructor, and town mayor **Captain Ramon V. Guico III** established the Binalonan Airfield in 2005 to serve as the headquarters of **WCC Aviation Company's Aeronautical and Technical College**. Not only does the school attract students from all over the country, but aspiring pilots from neighboring Asian countries are also coming to Binalonan to enrol.

"I would like to see Binalonan as a full-blown university town. We are inviting bigger universities to establish campuses here," says Captain Guico. Binalonan is also home to other institutions like University of Eastern Pangasinan, and the demand for lodging and dining options and other commercial establishments is helping the local economy grow. Captain Guico's infrastructure projects for the town include building sports facilities that are large enough to host regional sporting events.

WCC Aviation's in-house Alsim simulator, one of the finest platforms for teaching and learning multi-crew operations



1 The hangar of Binalonan Airfield, where the Tecnam P2006T planes are parked **2** WCC Aviation President and Binalonan Town Mayor Ramon Guico III with Pilot-Instructor Alito Getalica

WORLD-CLASS AVIATION EDUCATION

Now one of Asia's best aviation schools, WCC Aviation has state-of-the-art facilities which include an Alsim simulator, a European brand of flight training solutions that projects actual landscapes on a 180-degree screen and can simulate different weather conditions. From two hobby aircrafts in 2004, the school now boasts 30 planes that include brand new Tecnam trainer aircrafts from Italy, with two-seater P2002-JF models exclusive to WCC. On top of that, the school has its own watchtower, the same kind used by airports, enabling students to have real-world experience.

More than facilities and qualifications, however, Captain Guico considers character formation as the most critical aspect in education. WCC's curriculum includes subjects on personality development, communication, and leadership, giving students a holistic training. Having produced more than 500 commercial pilots in the last ten years, WCC's expansion plans are in place. Captain Guico plans to expand their services to include a park-and-fly concept and establish commercial flights from Binalonan to Batanes using a 19-seater aircraft. He also plans to offer sight-seeing flying tours to places only small planes can access, like the famous Hundred Islands of Alaminos.

For more information, call (+63 2) 551 1013 to 14 or visit <wccaviation.com>

UBIQUITOUSLY ASTORIA

By JOHN TANJANGCO | Photography STEVE FORTALEZA & EDGAR REYES

MILESTONES IN 2015. This year of the wooden sheep in the Chinese calendar will usher in two milestones for the Astoria Hotels & Resorts (AHR) brand. As the company continues the brand's growth, presence and expansion in the Philippines, 2015 will see the opening of two new properties in prime locations. The home grown local hotel chain is set to make its mark in Makati and Station 3 of Boracay, with the opening of Astoria Greenbelt and Current by Astoria, respectively.

FRESH. VIBRANT. HOT. Three keywords that best describe Astoria Hotels & Resorts' 8th establishment and its second foray in the best beach in the world Boracay: Current by Astoria. The resort is designed to keep up with the trending style and travel preference of today's millennial generation. Again AHR partnered with Gallego Architects and IT interior designers, Ivy and Cynthia Almario to deliver a resort that appeals to all generations with its imaginatively striking architecture and fun, playfully sexy interiors.

The 7000 plus sqm beachfront resort is located in the action side of the island: Station 3. The location gives guests easy access to the many water sports offerings, adrenaline pumping activities and the exhilarating nightlife Boracay has to offer. One of the resort's main attractions is the luxurious pool area, featuring a 25 m meter lap pool with 2 sides of clear acrylic panels, uber sexy sunken sun loungers and 8 built-in aqua seats with jet-massage nozzles. There is also a 50 sqm children's pool, a fully equipped gym and a spa to provide the perfect venue for fitness buffs and wellness seekers.

The resort's food and beverage outlets showcase Current's hip and fun culinary offerings. Indulge in mouth-watering meals at the main restaurant, Parasol. It is located on the ground floor and is directly accessible from the beach. Revel in breathtaking views of the ocean while enjoying great drinks and finger food at Stratos, a bar/lounge located at the 3rd floor roof deck. Within the central part of the resort lies the garden lounge Onyx. With its 5 sofa areas, it's a perfect spot to enjoy some peace and quiet.

The resort has 200+ luxurious and individually styled rooms awash with colorful avant-garde décor and distinct furniture. The Studio and Deluxe rooms have floor areas of 30 sqm, 1 Bedroom Suites with 49 sqm and the 2 Bedroom suites with 86 sqm. Each comes fully equipped with individual air-conditioning, cable TV with DVD player, safety deposit box fitted for laptops, mini bar, and rain shower with complete bath amenities.

REVAMPED. STYLISED. REBRANDED. AHR signed an agreement to manage the former One Greenbelt Hotel, to establish its presence in the financial capital of the Philippines. The newly opened Astoria Greenbelt is now the perfect choice for both business & leisure travelers seeking convenience and relaxation, in rooms embellished with distinct & stylised decor. Located in the heart of Makati's central business district along Arnaiz Avenue and is conveniently accessible when one needs to move in, out and around the city. At the end of the business day, it is a mere minute walk from restaurants, entertainment and shopping options found in the Ayala Malls. Atelier Almario, brings its luxurious touch once again to the entire interior of the hotel.

The lobby, the public areas and the guest rooms all underwent extensive renovation and now reflect AHR's signature style and branding aesthetic. Tableau is the hotel's restaurant and bar that serves drinks and deliciously crafted Asian-fusion cuisine, together with Astoria best sellers any time of the day. The outstandingly modern yet cozy ambience created at Tableau makes dining a visual and gastronomic delight. Each of the hotel's 48 rooms have been refurbished and styled to reflect uniquely playful yet relaxing décor in all three room categories: Superior, Deluxe & Prestige.

For more information on Astoria Greenbelt, Current by Astoria and the other Astoria properties, please visit www.astoriahotelsandresorts.com. Astoria Hotels and Resorts is managed by Asian Grand Legacy.

Deluxe Room at Current by Astoria

Deluxe Room at Astoria Greenbelt

The Reception at Astoria Greenbelt

VAMOS A MÉXICO

All aboard! Aeromexico's young fleet ensure better performance on air

As Mexico's global airline, **Aeromexico** is poised to offer more destinations (Toronto, Boston, Panama, and Medellin), a younger fleet, and higher quality service for an enhanced travel experience this year. Head off to those new places, but not before exploring North and South America with Aeromexico's transpacific flights via Tokyo, Japan and Shanghai, China

written by CRISTINA GREGORIO
photos courtesy of AEROMEXICO
additional photo courtesy of MERIAM OTARRA

In 2013, **Aeromexico** presented its first Dreamliner (Boeing 787-8) aircraft that operates between Mexico City and Tokyo, Japan. Out of the 19 ordered, nine are already operating a number of domestic and international flights in addition to Tokyo (Los Angeles, New York, Buenos Aires, Chile, London, Madrid, and Paris).

The cabin of the new jet airliner includes 32 seats with a full flat bed in the Clase Premier Business Class, and 211 next generation seats with extra legroom in the Economy Class. Equipped with LED lighting and windows that are larger than average, it is designed to ease fatigue during those long flights. With a Moving Map system providing real time flight information, a Jukebox application for music lovers to program playlists and sync their iPods with, and a Seat Chat allowing passengers to connect, it's an entirely unique travel experience on board Aeromexico.

With Skyteam's wide network, it's now easier to visit the many Mayan ruins of Mexico

Have a comfy flight with Aeromexico

Aeromexico also flies to Los Angeles, New York, London, and Paris

TRANSCONTINENTAL FLIGHTS

Aeromexico is also the only Latin American airline operating between Asia and South America. Direct flights leave Shanghai, China for Mexico City twice a week every Sunday and Thursday, which lasts about 14 hours. If you're keen on taking the Dreamliner, take any of the four flights (Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, or Sunday) from Tokyo, Japan to Mexico City and experience 12.5 hours of comfort. While Chinese and Japanese menus are available for these flights, it's important to note that premiere tequila brands are available at all long-haul flights after 11 AM!

Once you're in Mexico, choose from any of the 44 domestic destinations (offering beaches, history, arts, culture, pilgrimage sites, and gastronomic treats), explore any of its 15 destinations in South America, or pick from any of the 18 destinations in the north (including Canada). Aeromexico even makes it more convenient to go to the US with hourly flights operating between Mexico and Los Angeles and thrice daily flights to and from San Francisco.

Flying to and through Mexico has even become easier with visa requirements waived upon possession of a valid multiple entry US visa. Otherwise, one can simply lodge their tourist visa application at the Mexican Embassy in Makati. The Consular office will be happy to assist you .

AEROMEXICO IN THE PHILIPPINES

Although Aeromexico does not fly to the Philippines, it has appointed Travel Excellence Corporation its first official General Sales Agent in the Philippines. Partnering with the Mexican Embassy, Travel Excellence Corporation has been promoting travel to Mexico.

With Aeromexico being a founding member of Skyteam, it's no coincidence that its appointed GSA in the Philippines is also a Skyteam veteran, making it the best resource for passengers to maximize the 20 airlines in the alliance offering connections to more than 1000 destinations in 178 countries. Skyteam's unique products include the Round the World ticket or any of the passes for Europe, America, Asia, Africa, China, and Mexico. You can even earn Delta Skymiles on your Aeromexico flight!

For more information, phone (+63 2) 533 7200 or email <travelexcellencecorp@yahoo.com>

SHARP

BEYOND UHD EXPERIENCE

Comparing Quattron Pro model (LC-70LE960X) with our UHD model (LC-70UD1X)

AQUOS Quattron Pro

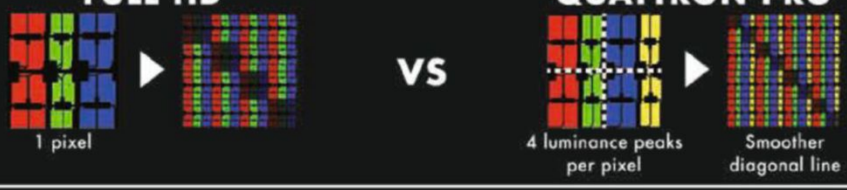
It's the new SHARP AQUOS Quattron Pro! Created by SHARP to enhance your viewing pleasure even greater with details that rival Ultra-HD TV, more brilliant color reproduction and brighter images. Now you can experience viewing quality beyond definition! Enjoy crisp, vivid picture quality with existing HD broadcasts!

For a Lively & Caring Tomorrow

HOW QUATTRON PRO ENHANCES YOUR VIEWING EXPERIENCE

Quattron Pro Technology generates 4 times more luminance peaks per pixel than Full HD. Resulting in 3,840 x 2,160 luminance peaks in total.

FULL HD VS **QUATTRON PRO**



For more information on AQUOS Quattron Pro, please log on to www.aquos-world.com
ASC Reference Code: S021P120214A

LOVE.LIFE

SHARP (PHILS.) CORPORATION
Km23 West Service Rd., South Super Highway, Alabang, Muntinlupa City
Tel Nos.: (+632) 842-0525 to 29 Fax No.: (+632) 842-0530 Toll Free No.: 1-800-1-888-4952

Sharp (Phils.) Corporation on
www.facebook.com/SharpPhilippines

THE HEART OF DAVAO

Marco Polo Davao offers guests comfortable rooms and impeccable service while also providing them with an accessible retreat right in the middle of **Davao City**

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of MARCO POLO DAVAO

The pool is open until 10 PM so guests can enjoy a night swim

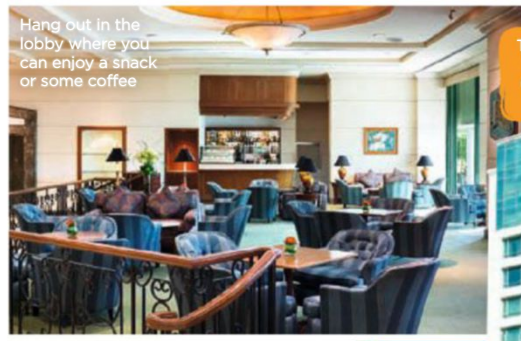
THE Welcome

Marco Polo Davao is a surprise of many sorts to first time guests—while the building is imposing (you can easily spot it from nearby Samal Island, or even as your plane descends into Davao City's Francisco Bangoy International Airport), my first step into the lobby left me awash with warmth and a homey feeling. From the get go, I knew that I would be spoiled during my stay. Upon arrival, our traveling party was whisked to Café Marco for a hearty lunch, and by the time we were done stuffing ourselves, our key cards were already waiting for us.

THE Scene

When they say that Marco Polo Davao is the heart of Davao, they mean it. For starters, it's around a half-hour drive from the airport, and is right across Aldevinco Shopping Center. If you still need your shopping fix at night, you can visit Roxas Avenue (literally a stone's throw away from the hotel) which turns into a street market where you can buy *ukay-ukay* and indulge in street food. The Davao Museum (where you can learn about local tribes), the Malagos Farmhouse (where you can buy cheese, chocolate, and other products from the famous Davao brand), and Tiny Kitchen (where you can taste their famous paella dishes), are also all just a short drive away from the hotel, so exploring the city should be a breeze.

Accessibility isn't just limited to city landmarks though—guests can learn about Philippine Eagles and other animals at the Philippine Eagle Center, which is just around an hour away from the hotel. Also just an hour drive away from Marco Polo Davao is Eden Nature Park and Resort, where adrenaline junkies can get their fix from the park's many attractions, including their zipline and Skycycle. For those who want a quick beach getaway, the Pearl Farm Beach Resort in Samal Island is just a half hour drive and a half hour boat ride away from the hotel.



Hang out in the lobby where you can enjoy a snack or some coffee

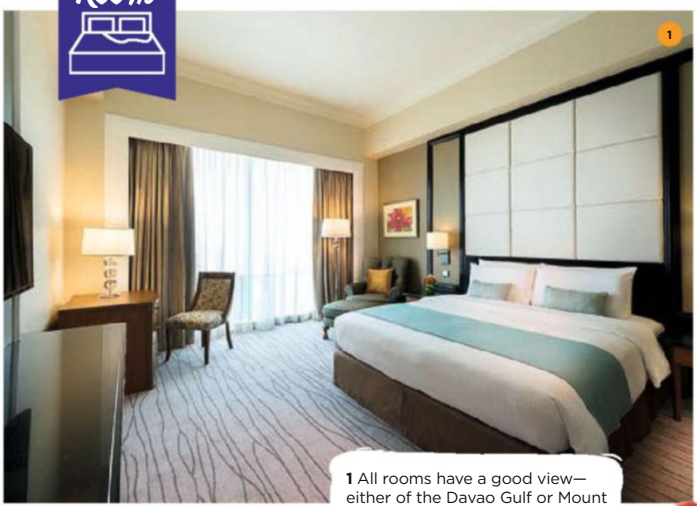
The hotel is right in the middle of the city, so it's easy to get around

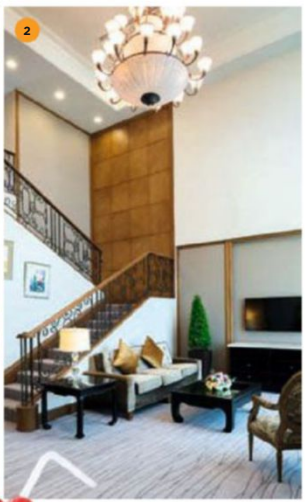
THE Pool

The pool is ideal for both fitness buffs and families, because while its length is perfect

for swimming laps, it only goes to a depth of five feet, which gently tapers off into more shallow waters. The pool bar is also the perfect place to have a drink while watching the sunset.

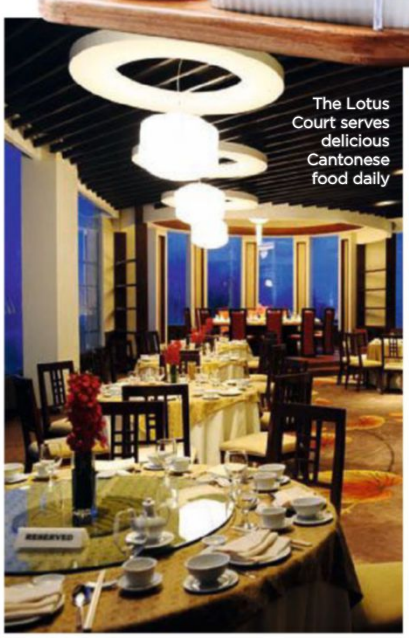
THE Room





1 All rooms have a good view—either of the Davao Gulf or Mount Apo **2** For more discerning guests, the Presidential Suite will give the required privacy **3** Grab some lunch at Café Marco

I was booked in a Deluxe Room, and my window view was that of the Davao Gulf, which was only made better during the sunrise (other Deluxe Rooms may get views of Mount Apo and the sunset). It was spacious enough for me to unpack my luggage fully and make the entire room feel homey. The complimentary WiFi throughout the hotel was one of the fastest I've experienced in the Philippines, and with the comfy bed and the thick sheets, my downtime in Davao was as relaxing as can be.



The Lotus Court serves delicious Cantonese food daily

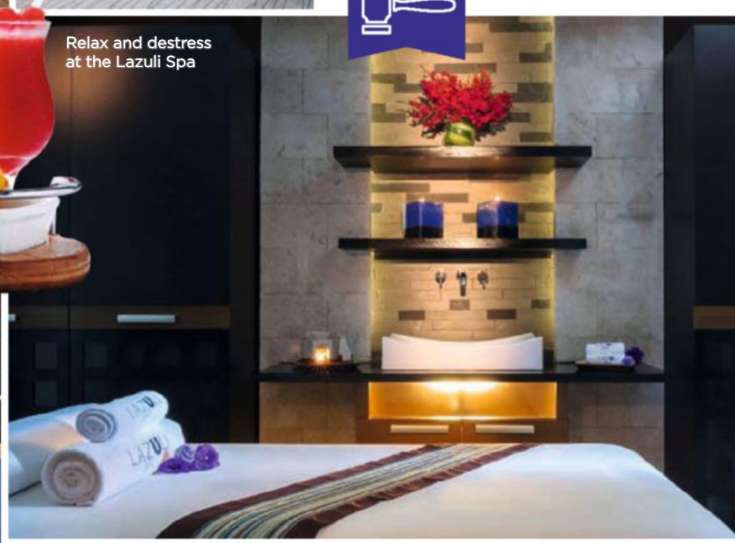
THE Food

Breakfast was served in Café Marco, and what a spread their breakfast buffet was! With a good selection including breads, crispy bacon, cheese from Malagos, and even churros with chocolate, it was hard not to go back for seconds (or thirds!).

Our group also had the chance to have dinner at Lotus Court and Polo Bistro. The former is a Cantonese restaurant known for its divine dim sum and Yin Yang Two-Way Style Green Garoupa, while the latter is a poolside restaurant known for its Grilled Blue Marlin, US Angus Prime Rib Cut Tenderloin Steak, and Baby Back Pork Ribs with Sweet Potato, Corn Kernel and Kidney Bean Salad. Suffice it to say, we all ended the day with full bellies during those two nights.

THE Service

I am not a fan of overeager and intrusive service, and I can guarantee that Marco Polo Davao's staff, while ever present, provided understated assistance to the hotel's guests, which I greatly appreciated. I always came back to a tidied up room, and during breakfast, the staff always seated me in my favorite table.



Relax and destress at the Lazuli Spa

THE Spa

The Lazuli Spa not only provides guests with dozens of spa treatments, but it also gives them the choice of how long their treatments are going to last. I opted for the two-hour Aromatherapy Massage, which was really relaxing, especially after a full day of exploring Davao's sights.

AT Check Out

Similar to our check-in experience, check out was a breeze. I usually go to the lobby a good 15 minutes before I have to leave to ensure I have ample time to settle my account and not be late for my flight, but this time, I was done in less than five minutes. I was already sad to be leaving my home for four days, and wished I had stayed in my room for even just 10 minutes longer.

THE Verdict

When visiting Davao, Marco Polo should always be your first option for accommodation, whether you're traveling for business or pleasure, alone or with a group. Its service and facilities will ensure you a comfortable stay, while its location will make sure you easily get to experience what Davao has to offer.

Marco Polo Davao is located at Claro M. Recto Street, Davao City, Philippines. For bookings and reservations, phone (+63 82) 221 0888 or visit <marcopolohotels.com/en/marco_polo/hotels/philippines/davao/marco_polo_davao/index.html>

NOT SO FAR FROM HOME

Charlene Bobis lists the best staycation getaways in the metro

photos courtesy of MARRIOTT HOTEL MANILA, SOFITEL PHILIPPINE PLAZA MANILA, EDSA SHANGRI-LA MANILA, *and* CRIMSON HOTEL FILINVEST CITY MANILA

Escape from the stress of the metro without actually leaving the city with a staycation

COMFORT CONTROL AT MARRIOTT HOTEL MANILA

You're on the fast track for a promotion. You've already taken lots of time off for the recent holidays. You and your family can't coordinate your vacation schedules. Or you simply need to get away from it all—without being too far away.

In other words, you need a staycation—but not at home. You need a place where you don't have to worry about the laundry getting done or about where and what your next meal is going to be. You need to be pampered and indulged.

Yet you can't leave the country—and the prospect of a long road trip or of having to wait hours for yet another delayed flight dismays you because they both waste precious time. You still need to be close enough to the office to get things done—but you also need to be away from it all, to bring down stress to manageable levels so that you can focus on what's important.

Lately, Metro Manila denizens have taken to checking in at the city's best hotels so that they can have brief getaways from the pressures of everyday life. There isn't a single demographic to which this is limited; single persons, couples, even families and groups of friends or colleagues can and do benefit from a staycation, which also has no set popular time; people take a staycation when they need it.

We've done our own staycation weekends, and here are the best places we've found for this sweet little respite.

HIDEAWAY ADVANTAGE One doesn't expect to be able to isolate oneself from the hustle and bustle of Metro Manila in a hotel that's at the heart of one of its most chic districts.

WHY IT'S BETTER THAN GOING OUT OF TOWN Choose a room facing bustling Newport City if you want to feel connected to the metro's pulse, or ask for a room facing the adjoining golf course for a delicious dose of a natural landscape. The Marriott's attention to the small details that contribute to guest comfort (such as the well-appointed guest bathrooms, well-thought-out toiletry provisions, and the efficient and friendly staff) is unobtrusive yet noticeable for those who consider those details of paramount importance.

Stay inside the comfy room all you like—it's a staycation after all

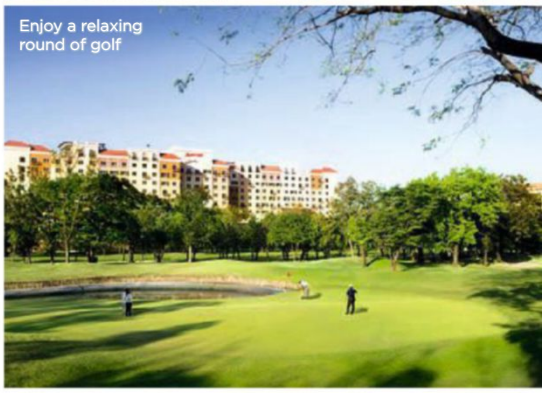
CULINARY HIGHLIGHT What's a vacation without good food? The Cru Steakhouse is a great place to learn about good steaks, as theirs are beautifully done, marinated to the point where it's a shame to add anything other than a dash of pepper or a bit of gravy to them. No burnt crusts to slice off—the large steaks are grilled carefully to be fork-tender and perfectly delicious.

Cru's menu is quite short—an indicator among true connoisseurs of good food that there will be excellent food here—yet each set offered is well-thought-out, every item from starter to dessert carefully planned to be a culinary experience of a higher kind. They change starters daily, but feel free to ask them for your favorites!

RESORT IN THE CITY Quan Spa is quite the experience. Bigger than many local spas, it's the unobtrusive professionalism of the staff and their sensitivity to your needs and minor discomforts that take the experience to world-class levels. You'll appreciate their well-appointed dressing rooms (with individual and separate showers and toilets) and the thick robes they provide for clients.

BEST-KEPT SECRET The Marriott is a great place to check in if you want to deal with minor stress-related ailments. Also, a warm 10-minute soak in your tub (using the thoughtfully provided bath salts) can dull the pain of minor strains or sprains, and even mild joint pains. While they can't take the place of a medical professional, a stay at the Marriott brings home the truth to the old joke that it's sometimes better to check in at a hotel than at a hospital.

Dig in at the hotel's fine dining restaurants



Enjoy a relaxing round of golf

WHY IT SHOULD BE YOUR STAYCATION CHOICE The best part of doing your urban getaway at the Marriott is the ability to control your level of escape from the urban rat race. You dictate the pace of your staycation—and the staff is your biggest ally!

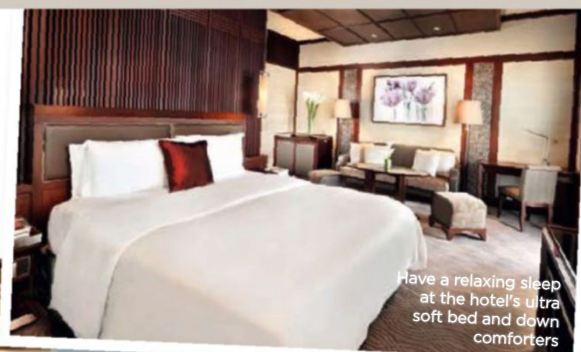
Marriott Hotel Manila is located at Number 10 Newport Boulevard, Newport City Complex, Pasay City. For more information, visit <marriott.com/hotels/travel/mnlap-manila-marriott-hotel>

Prepare your stomach for a gastronomical treat as you descend the stairs to Spiral

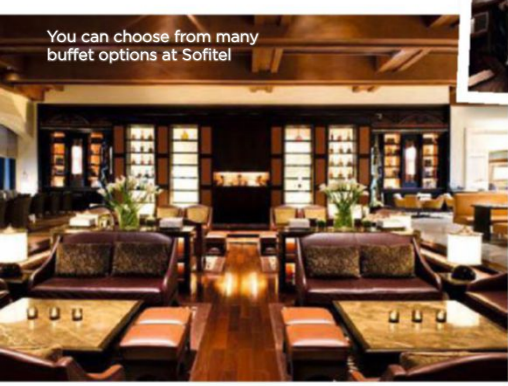
CONNECTED LEISURE AT SOFITEL PHILIPPINE PLAZA MANILA

HIDEAWAY ADVANTAGE Need to get away from it all but can't leave the metro? Consider the Sofitel and its central location plus its family-friendly facilities.

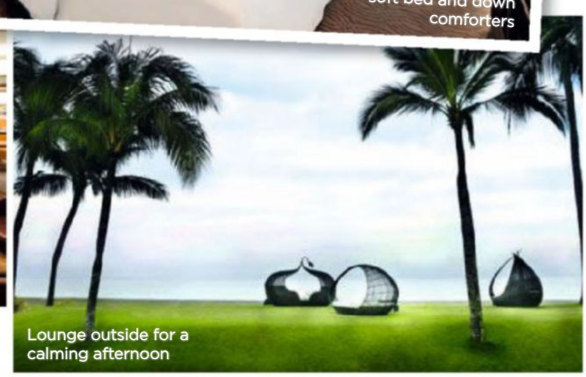
WHY IT'S BETTER THAN GOING OUT OF TOWN Drop the kids off at Gymboree, the world-renowned "learn-as-you-play" center, bask by the pool and while away the hours people-watching, and have access to 24 hours of generous and delicious comfort food at their Snaps sports bar where the American-sized servings of comfort food can calm even the hungriest of clients. You can leave the world behind—yet still be connected thanks to the Sofitel's executive Millésime lounge's facilities and work-friendly room setup.



Have a relaxing sleep at the hotel's ultra soft bed and down comforters



You can choose from many buffet options at Sofitel



Lounge outside for a calming afternoon

CULINARY HIGHLIGHT The Sofitel's buffet is popular in the metro for a very good reason, and it only gets better on Sundays, when their brunch includes specialty dishes on an expanded menu, and champagne. Ignore the well-meaning advice that tells you to only choose the expensive items. You're doing yourself a disservice, as the so-called ordinary items like the pasta, the salads, and the Chinese station offerings are also extraordinary. Don't forget the Sofitel's elegant lobby café.

RESORT IN THE CITY The Sofitel's pool area is famous not just for providing a balmy place to frolic in the city but also for selfies and people-watching. Expect to see engaged and marrying couples taking their photos here. Grab a chaise, lie back, and just let the world drift by around you. And don't forget—in your room are the king-size beds with their down comforters! Feel free to lose the battle to stay awake in their welcoming beds—after all, those of us in the urban rat race often need sleep desperately.

BEST-KEPT SECRET Famous for being home to The Spa, Sofitel adds a new weapon to its pampering arsenal with the Vietura health and wellness center. Be sure to book in advance as their waiting rooms, even on an off-peak Monday, are crammed with repeat customers—always a good sign. Offering nutrition and fitness support, dental services, and aesthetic therapy (all backed by licensed doctors with impressive credentials), do try out the Resonax lift for the face, which has instant and pleasantly visible results!

WHY IT SHOULD BE YOUR STAYCATION CHOICE Best for people who want to select which aspects of city life they want to leave behind, and the best parts of resort vacations that they want to import to the city.

Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila is located at CCP Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City. For more information, visit <sofitelmanila.com>

GETTING AWAY IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ALL AT EDSA SHANGRI-LA MANILA

1 Spend a night or two at EDSA Shangri-la to melt your stress away **2** Take advantage of the hotel's many recreational facilities **3** Have a treatment at one of the metro's most famous spas—Chi, the Spa

WHY IT'S BETTER THAN GOING OUT OF TOWN Though it's famous for being one of the hottest places in town for events, what you'll enjoy at the EDSA Shangri-La are out-of-town pleasures to revive the body, mind, and spirit with the hotel's health and wellness facilities, promises Communications Director Cristina del Carmen. The hotel's location allows for quick one- or two-night getaways to refresh oneself while being able to plunge right back into the thick of things.

CULINARY HIGHLIGHT Of course you're going to have a buffet lunch or dinner at Heat—but why not also savor an elegant afternoon teatime against a backdrop of lush tropical gardens and relaxing fountains at the EDSA Shangri-La's newly refurbished Lobby Lounge, which features premium teas and delicious snacks prepared by Executive Pastry Chef Martin Frowd?

RESORT IN THE CITY
There's only one Chi, the Spa, in Manila, and it's at EDSA Shangri-La. Known internationally for its expertise in wellbeing, it's one of the top spa destinations in Manila.

WHY IT SHOULD BE YOUR STAYCATION CHOICE
You're right in the middle of the most chic shopping district and the center of business—yet knowing you're off-duty makes you savor your staycation even more.

EDSA Shangri-La Manila is located at 1 Garden Way, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City. For more information, visit <shangri-la.com/manila/edsashangrila>

A SOUTHERN ESCAPE AT CRIMSON HOTEL FILINVEST CITY MANILA

WHY IT'S BETTER THAN GOING OUT OF TOWN If the staycation doesn't appeal to you because you still have to take care of the household chores, the Crimson is a good choice for you, as they promise homey comforts with beyond-premium facilities and services.

CULINARY HIGHLIGHT Renowned Italian chef Allesso Loddo is the Crimson's executive chef—no wonder their Cafe 8 is a popular buffet restaurant which also doubles as the hotel's coffee shop and restaurant.

1 Cool off at their pool **2** Be welcomed by the hotel's modern interiors **3** Crimson has many accommodations for any type of staycationer

RESORT IN THE CITY Have an in-room massage on their chiropractic beds! Crimson Hotel promises that these special beds will not only pamper you but will also afford you some of the best sleep time you've ever had. There's also the popular swimming pool, Deck Bar, gym, and, should you require it, a shuttle to take you to the nearby shopping malls.

WHY IT SHOULD BE YOUR STAYCATION CHOICE If your urge to take a break is a spur-of-the-moment capriccio, the Crimson is positioned practically out of town already, being just minutes off the South Superhighway. The hotel emphasizes the family component of its staycation offerings, helping families maximize the time they get to spend quality time together, with a wide variety of activity offerings.

Crimson Hotel Filinvest City Manila is located at Entrata Urban Complex, 2609 Civic Drive, Filinvest City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. For more information, visit <crimsonhotel.com/manila>

SOUTH ASIA BY BACKPACK

TRAVELING LIGHT THROUGH ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

Nothing quite equals the experience of backpacking across Southeast Asia—whether riding on the back of an open-air bus, trudging through flea markets, or hopping on a plane, traveling with all your essentials packed into one bag is an exercise in minimalism and an adventure to strange-yet-familiar places.

A backpacker favorite, Bangkok enjoys a reputation as a vibrant and exciting destination, and offers lively street markets, spectacular temples, and flamboyant nightlife. In contrast, northern Thailand offers a more laidback charm with its cultural attractions. Just two hours by bus from Bangkok is Ayutthaya, the ancient capital of Thailand and a stunning city filled with temples and religious structures. Three rivers—the Chao Phraya, the Lopburi, and the Pa Sak Rivers—converge here. The most enjoyable way to get around the ancient ruins is by bicycle, although *tuk-tuks* are also available to take visitors around the complex.

Cambodia is likewise a backpacker favorite, starting with Siem Reap. Most explorers go straight to the Angkor Archeological Park, the 400-square-kilometer forested complex of the magnificent ruins of the ancient Khmer empire. The complex holds major temples like Angkor Wat and the Bayon Temple of Angkor Thom, with smaller and more hidden temples in the vicinity. Cambodian capital Phnom Penh can be reached by bus from Siem Reap. The city, with its many museums, memorials, and pagodas, gives visitors a powerful glimpse of the country's rich history and culture. Other activities to try are river cruises, cooking classes, and checking out the street markets.

More than an inexpensive way to travel, backpacking is an exhilarating and enriching way to experience a destination. It compels travelers to go beyond their comfort zones, deviate from the usual tourist route, live the way locals do, and make friends along the way. Cebu Pacific Air, with its low fares and network, empowers travel enthusiasts to explore the best backpacking destinations of Southeast Asia. The airline offers multi-city tickets that allow you to fly to one country and depart from another, maximizing your trip. Make that dream escapade happen now and book flights at <www.cebupacificair.com>

Smart Travel

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES TO BECOME THE BEST TRAVELER

TRAVEL NOW

IN THIS ISSUE LEARN HOW TO

EMBARK ON A "WING-IT" KIND OF TRIP
PAGE 42

PACK ESSENTIALS FOR OUTDOOR TRAVEL
PAGE 43

PUT TOGETHER A BASIC ADVENTURE OUTFIT
PAGE 44

NATURE-PROOF YOUR PERSONAL BELONGINGS
PAGE 46

CREATE THE PERFECT TRAVEL SOUNDTRACK
PAGE 48

The new Sony 4K Action Cam FDR-X1000V/W becomes water-, dust-, and shock-proof with its protective case, making it an ideal outdoor travel buddy

THE ART OF WINGING IT

They say if you fail to prepare, you're preparing to fail. But what if foresight alone doesn't give you an advantage? These few tips and a little improvisation will help you take off on the right foot when traveling

written by **KIT SINGSON**
illustrated by **DANA DE LEON**

BOOKING FLIGHTS

There is an abundance of cheap flights and packages offered by airlines, so take advantage of that. Subscribe through email or app notifications for air travel sales. Some websites like <skyscanner.com> can alert you daily on price drops, and yes, there are those rare times when booking last minute can actually cost you less. If you're aiming for an international flight, fly from Clark or Cebu to get even cheaper tickets. Your commute fare will cost you a fraction compared to the total if you're coming from Manila. Flexibility is key.

PACKING

With the little time that you have, research on the weather or climate of your destination during your stay and pack your luggage accordingly. If you foresee more wing-it adventures in your future, always have at the ready a bag packed with the basics. Edit its contents as your trip comes near.

BUDGETING

Decide what the trip's agenda is. Is it a shopping, sight-seeing, or an activity-filled trip? Perhaps your objective is to acquaint yourself with the home-grown art and music scenes. Allocate the bulk of your budget to your priority and lean up on the rest of your expenses (besides good food, of course).

TRANSPORTATION

Familiarize yourself with the public transport system on your first day. Get a map and read way-finding signage to educate yourself. If you get lost or hop on the wrong train line, disembark on the next station and re-orient. Seek the help of authorities if necessary. Given this, don't be afraid to walk! The more chances of you getting lost (and discovering hidden gems), the better.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Since you'll likely spend most of your days out of your room, look for the most economic yet decent hotel to stay in. Begin your search in areas near train stations or bus terminals. This way, once booked, you can explore the place easier.

If you're on a tight budget, stay at a hostel. This is also a fun way to meet fellow travelers who just might be the answer to your prayers when money is tight. They might have friends in the area you can bunk up with, or they can help you get in touch with the Couchsurfing community if you're the adventurous type. If all else fails, sleep in the station or on the bus.

ITINERARY AND TOURS

If you like going on group tours, check if there are packages that come with booking your tickets. You can also get in touch with the hotel management to help you reserve slots for group tours as well. However, if you like creating your own itinerary, a good practice is to list down all your planned destinations, plot them in a map, and visit one area per day. Additionally, reserve a day for "getting lost." Read up on local buzz-worthy places and visit them, walk around town, and explore side streets. You never know what you'll find around the next bend in the road.

Bookings can definitely be accomplished last minute, but be aware that by doing this, your options will be fewer and likely more expensive.

11 OUTDOOR ESSENTIALS

Whether you're heading to the beach, the ocean, or the mountains, make sure you have all these packed before setting off for your next great adventure

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photographed by RON MENDOZA OF STUDIO 100
art directed by MERIAM OTARRA

A MULTI-TOOL

Handy tools like these, as the name suggests, are useful for several reasons. You can use it for opening cans, eating, making quick repairs, cutting rope, and even protecting yourself.

A FILLED WATER BOTTLE

With any kind of travel, staying hydrated is important. Since you probably will have limited access to clean water, make sure you bring enough for the trip.

A FIRST AID KIT

Make sure it has the basics, including bandages, gauze, tweezers, antiseptic, and cotton buds. Don't forget to personalize it. For instance, pack anti-allergy medication if you have allergies.

A FLASHLIGHT

Even if you're not planning to stay outside after nightfall, it is always wise to bring a small one with you in case of unplanned trip extensions.

MATCHES OR A LIGHTER

You're not on *Survivor*, so there's no need to use sticks and rocks to start a fire. Make sure you waterproof your matches by applying a coat of clear nail polish on the heads.

A LENGTH OF PARACORD OR A PARACORD BRACELET

Paracords are light but strong nylon cords originally used in parachutes. Like the multi-tool, it is now considered essential in emergency outdoor survival, as it can have many uses.

A SOLAR CHARGER OR A POWER BANK

You're not likely to find any electrical outlet in the outdoors, so always have an extra source of power with you (and make sure it's juiced up!).

SUNBLOCK

Applying sunblock every time you're going outdoors is crucial in maintaining the health of your skin. Radiation from the sun can get to you even when in you're a shaded area, so be diligent in slathering it on regularly.

This SunExpert Body Shield from Belo has SPF60 and provides broad-spectrum protection against UV rays as soon as applied, making it ideal for any outdoor trip.

EMERGENCY RAIN GEAR

Umbrellas are bulky, and are a hassle to always hold up when exploring outdoors. Disposable raincoats like these are not only light, they also take up very little room in your bag.

SNACKS

Since you'll probably have full meals planned, treat these as emergency nutrition for when you get hungry in between. Make sure you pack treats that are healthy, portable, and won't spoil easily.

INSECT REPELLENT

Being outdoors makes you more prone to insect bites, including that of disease-carrying mosquitos. If you don't like the lotion or spray-on kind, you can try anti-insect patches, which you can simply stick on to your clothing. Most have time-release formulas, so they stay effective for a long period of time.

ALL DRESSED UP

Whether you will be surfing, skiing, skydiving, or safariing, each outdoor trip has a different clothing requirement depending on the environment, but it wouldn't hurt to always have these basics in your closet

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of COLUMBIA, HEADWARE, EYE SOCIETY, SPEEDO, THE NORTH FACE, GEOX, *and* NATIVE

STURDY SUNGLASSES

1

Don't be tempted to buy cheap knock-offs—they might save you a lot of money and might even look good on you, but they may not be able to protect your eyes from sun damage. Go for those that offer 100% UV protection, and if you like to spend your time on beaches, make sure the lenses are scratch-resistant.

A TRUSTY HAT

2

A good hat will protect your head from the sun and the rain, a better hat is made of breathable material that will keep your head cool and sweat away from your eyes. Make sure you get one that may easily be packed (ditch those hard unfoldable ones) and fits your head perfectly—loose enough to let your head breathe but snug enough so that it won't be blown away by a gust of wind.

A STRETCHY MULTIFUNCTIONAL HEADWEAR

3

Popularized by the show *Survivor*, these tubular, seamless, and stretchy pieces of fabric have so many uses—you can wear it as a headband, a hairband, a hair tie, an armband, a wristband a hood, a mask to cover your mouth and nose, and even as a tube top—making it essential in any outdoor travel.

A SHIRT THAT WORKS OVERTIME

4

Outdoor travel companies have long upped the ante when it comes to double-duty fabric, giving us clothing that warms us when we're cold, cools us when we're warm, keeps our bodies dry under the rain, and even blocks insects and the harsh rays of the sun. Keep an arsenal of these shirts at the ready if you always find yourself exploring the outdoors.

A JACKET THAT WEATHERS ALL CLIMATES

5

High-quality jackets are often bulky and take up a lot of room, so if you can, bring only one that can keep you dry in the rain and warm in the snow. With new technologies though, nowadays thickness doesn't always equate to warmth, so research on lighter and thinner alternatives that can still work for you. If you do decide to go old school with thick linings, make sure the jacket is not so thick that it lessens the mobility of your arms and neck.

PERFECT FITTING SWIMWEAR

6

Don't purchase swimwear without trying it on first and making sure it gives enough coverage and support where it really matters. Consider your itinerary. If you just plan on just sunbathing or swimming, a bikini is okay, but if you plan on surfing or jet skiing, you might also want to invest in a rashguard and board shorts.

DURABLE PANTS OR SHORTS

7

Take note of fit, breathability, and mobility. Tight-fitting pairs may considerably lessen mobility, while too loose ones will not help in retaining warmth. Make sure the pair is thick enough that it can withstand outdoor wear and tear, but thin enough to let your skin breathe. If you're going to experience different kinds of temperature, consider convertible pants, which transform into a pair of shorts with just one unzip.

A HARDWEARING ROOMY BAG

8

You won't run out of options when it comes to bags, and choosing the right one mostly boils down to preference. Frequent outdoor travelers often go for those that are sturdy, water-proof or water-resistant, and have adjustable straps and several pockets and compartments, but if you're more a beach kind of person, a lightweight beach bag will also do. The most important thing to consider is that it can securely carry all your essentials without weighing you down too much.

TOUGH BUT COMFORTABLE SHOES

9

While you should always bring a pair of flip-flops or aqua shoes for swimming and hiking boots for trekking, you should also have a couple of pairs meant for general outdoor use. Comfort should always be a priority (make sure the material is breathable and not too heavy), but you should also carefully inspect the thickness of the soles, the quality of stitching, and the tread depth so you can gauge how much wear it can take before you need to replace it.

1

Burberry Trench Collection Cat Eye Sunglasses

Available at Eye Society Branches

2

Columbia Bora Bora II Booney

3

The HeadWare

4

Columbia Zero Rules Short Sleeve Graphic Shirt with Omni-Freeze Technology

5

The North Face Momentum Triclimate

6

Speedo Allover Rippleback Two-Piece Swimsuit

7

Levi's 501 CT

8

Columbia Trail Pursuit 30L Backpack

9

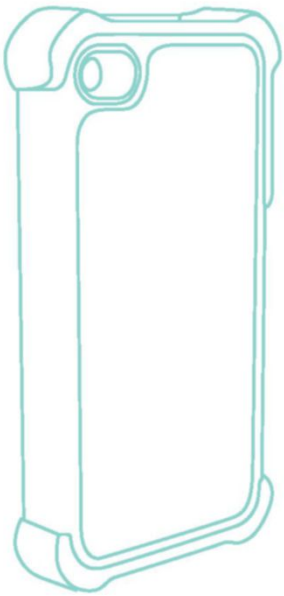
Native Apollo Chukka

GEOX Guerrero

NATURE-PROOFED

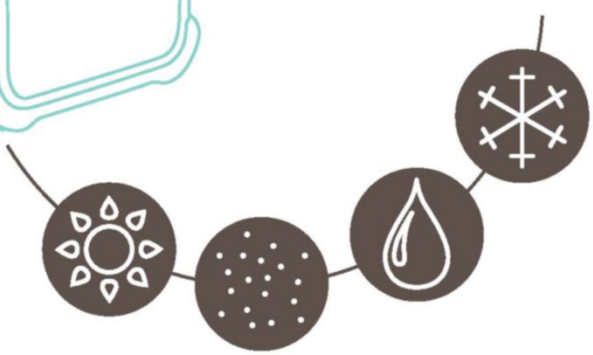
The sun, sand, sea, and snow can take its toll on your gear and personal belongings. Pack these items on your next outdoor trip to protect them from the elements

written by **KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO**
illustrated by **MERIAM OTARRA**



PROTECTIVE CASINGS OR SLEEVES

If you often travel outdoors, invest in protective cases for your valuables. Nothing will give you a better peace of mind than a water-, dust-, freeze- and/or shock-proof case for your gear. Just make sure that you purchase an original product made specifically for your device. They will cost a significant amount, but cheap and shoddy alternatives are not only unreliable, but their usage can also void warranties.



DRY BAGS

Nowadays, it's hard to go on a beach trip without seeing at least one dry bag slung across a beach-goer's body, and with good reason. A high-quality dry bag can not only protect your gadgets from water and sand, but it can also double as a floating device.

MORE TIPS:

1 Before heading to the water, check if your water-proofed items are indeed water-proof—make sure all openings are sealed tight. You don't want to head into the water only to later discover that the water-proof casing wasn't sealed properly. (Trust me, I've seen it happen.)

2 Extremely high temperatures can cause plugged in batteries to overheat, while the extreme cold can significantly lower battery life. Prevent this by removing the batteries from your device and wrapping them loosely in a dry towel when not in use.

3 Acclimatize your electronics. When going from one area to another with a drastically different temperature (like the inside of an air-conditioned car to a hot beach), make sure to give your gear enough time to adapt to the outside temperature before using them.

4 In extreme heat, wrap gadgets loosely in a piece of light fabric if you can't stay in the shade. If it becomes too hot to the touch, give it a break and turn it off for a while. Unless the area you are in is windy and/or dusty, remove the batteries from your device to let it cool down.

5 If sand gets on your gadgets, resist the urge to wipe it away. The sand particles may scratch the surface of the device, which may cause irreparable damage. Gently blow the sand away (make sure you don't blow it further inside small crevices). Use an air blower pump dust cleaner (which is used to clean cameras) for hard to reach areas.

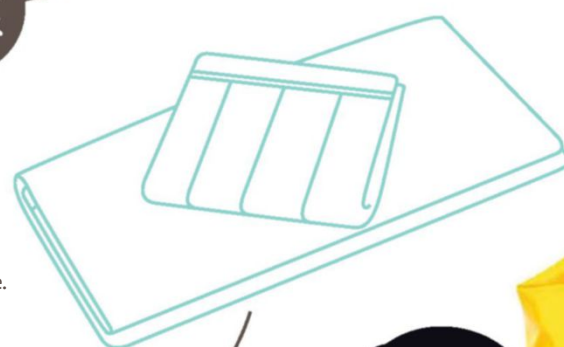
6 Make sure your gadgets are dry before you store them. Pack with dry hands so you won't unwittingly seal in moisture along with them.

WATER-PROOF COATING PRODUCTS

Most of these products come in spray form and rejuvenate and repair the durable water repellent coating that come with already water-proof items (whose water-proofing capabilities may have diminished because of time and regular wear and tear). Some brands also have products that can make your personal belongings (including clothing, footwear, and important documents including maps) temporarily water-proof.

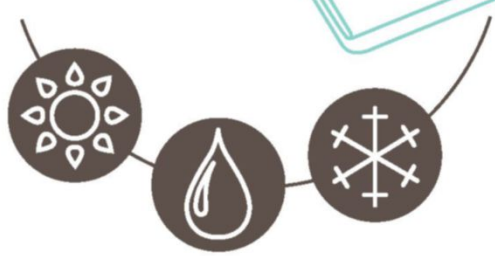
DESICCANT PACKETS

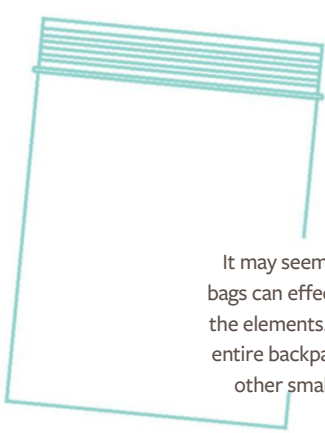
You know those small packets you find packed in with a brand new pair of shoes or a bottle of vitamins? We may have been warned as kids to stay away from these things (as they are not safe to be ingested), but desiccant packets can be heaven-sent for frequent outdoor travelers who can't leave home without their gadgets. These packets absorb moisture, and keeping one packed with your camera can prevent moisture in the air from seeping into the insides of your device. Just note that desiccants lose their ability to absorb moisture over time so remember to replace them regularly.



SMALL TOWELS

These can not only help wipe off excess water, they can also serve as protection from the heat or the cold. Remember to pack one separate from that which you use for personal hygiene.





PLASTIC BAGS

It may seem like a crass method, but for emergency situations, plastic bags can effectively protect your valuables and personal belongings from the elements. You may use a garbage bag to protect large items like your entire backpack and small resealable plastic bags for your cellphone and other small items. Just make sure to always check for rips or holes.

WIN!
Want your own **Tactics Water Gear Dry Bag**? Turn to page 10 to find out how you can win a 20L dry bag!

TRAVEL NOW RECOMMENDS

SONY 4K ACTION CAM FDR-X1000V/W

Designed to be used outdoors, the new Sony Action Cam is splash-proof, but when coupled with its protective case, it not only becomes water-proof, but dust- and shock-proof as well. With a video recording resolution of up to 240p HD / 120p Full HD and a built-in stereo microphone with wind noise reduction capabilities, your vacation videos will also be better than ever. The camera also uses SteadyShot image stabilization technology, making sure all your snaps are sharp, no matter what kind of activity you're doing.

TACTICS WATER GEAR DRYBAG

Made of nylon-coated lightweight PVC tarpaulin, Tactics' dry bags effectively enclose your belongings in an airtight chamber with high frequency welded seams, keeping everything inside safe from water, sand, and dirt damage. Their bags feature a removable adjustable strap and come in sizes of 5L, 10L, and 20L, so you can choose what to buy depending on your kind of trip.

PLEASE DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

Travel involves lots of long hours of doing nothing, and it's always a challenge to make time fly by. Whether it's to put you to sleep for a flight or even just to daydream, a well-crafted playlist is essential. Let *The Voice of the Philippines* alumna **Kai Honasan** be your guide in creating a you-specific travel playlist

illustrated by KIMCHI LEE
photos courtesy of APPLE, SONY, *and* SAMSUNG

THINK ABOUT PURPOSE OF THE TRIP

Is it an all-girls road trip? Then you have to go for the massive sing-along hits. Feel free to go all-out girl power with a little Katy Perry (try going back to her first album for some anthems you may have missed out on like "If You Can Afford Me"). For more variety, go for a 90s trip with the Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys, or even Hanson. Nostalgia is a trend nowadays, so you might as well get your playlist in on it too.

USE THE TIME TO DISCOVER NEW MUSIC

When I know I'll be in a plane or a car for a while, what I usually do is use the time to discover great new bands. Nowadays, lots of TV shows usually have carefully curated soundtracks that can blend in the background of the show but still make it sound cool (for a while all the new music I'd listen to came from *Grey's Anatomy* OSTs.) So when you know you're about to go on a trip, include on your playlist as much TV soundtracks (or some other tracks new to your ears) as you can and just sit back and relax.

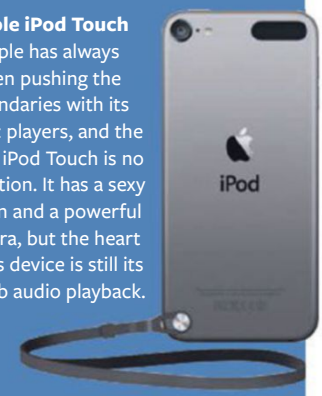
If all else fails, you can get your travel playlist via Spotify (available on Android and iOS) or Amplify (<amplify.ph>)—you might as well use the idle time you have to browse through their pre-made playlists. If you like a band you find there, search through their discography. One band will lead to another, then next thing you know, you've already crafted your own travel playlist.

CONSIDER THE LENGTH OF TRAVEL TIME

You don't want to be on a long-haul flight and have a playlist filled with EDM. If you want to get some sleep during the flight and you're in it to relax, try to stock up on the scores from movies like *The Legend of 1900* or *August Rush* or anything composed by Ennio Morricone. If it's a short hour and a half trip, feel free to knock yourself out by listening to a couple of artists' entire albums. When was the last time you did that?

The perfect travel playlist is useless if you don't have an awesome gadget to play it on! Here are TRAVEL NOW's picks:

Apple iPod Touch
Apple has always been pushing the boundaries with its music players, and the latest iPod Touch is no exception. It has a sexy design and a powerful camera, but the heart of this device is still its superb audio playback.



Sony Sports Walkman NWZ-WS613BLK
We can't leave out the brand that created the portable audio player boom. This modern-day Walkman is wearable, so you don't need to mess around with cords. It's also waterproof, so you can even take it along on swimming trips.

Samsung Galaxy S WiFi
The Galaxy S' SoundAlive technology ensures crisp sound quality and optimized clarity, creating an immersive listening experience. Samsung's WiFi capable device is more than just a music player though—it also doubles as an efficient social media gadget.

Destinations

TRAVEL NOW

> **Go to Cecil Peak, a mountain located in the Wakatipu Basin. The easiest way to visit the mountain range and the peaks is to ride a helicopter going there.**

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW ZEALAND
PAGE 50

FEATURES

- SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW ZEALAND PAGE 50
- MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES IN TAIWAN PAGE 58
- INDIA'S TROPICAL SECRETS PAGE 62
- ONE ISLAND AT A TIME PAGE 66
- A MISHMASH OF INFLUENCES PAGE 70
- THE COLORS OF BOLIVIA PAGE 74
- HALA BIRA! PAGE 78
- BASKING IN SUN, SEA, AND STORIES PAGE 84
- DIVING DEEP PAGE 88
- WORLDLY WHEREABOUTS PAGE 94
- WORLD TRAVELER: CHERYL TIU PAGE 98
- FARM, FARM AWAY PAGE 102
- A TASTE OF THAILAND PAGE 104
- INTERCOFFEENENTAL PAGE 106

Cecil Peak, New Zealand

SOMETHING OLD SOMETHING NEW ZEALAND

The couple, Anthony and Glenn, with a beautiful backdrop of The Remarkables

A wedding coverage became a lift off for adventure in **New Zealand** for wedding photographers **Oly Ruiz** and **Erron Ocampo**

written by GUIA GALVEZ
photographed by OLY RUIZ *and* ERRON OCAMPO

WHEN TWO TOP PHOTOGRAPHERS GO ON VACATION, EXPECT INSTAGRAM-WORTHY, MADE-FOR-POSTCARDS SCENIC SHOTS THAT'LL BLOW YOU AWAY. Oly Ruiz and Erron Ocampo, the men behind the lens of Metro Photo, went to **New Zealand** to cover a touching same-sex wedding and used the opportunity to explore the picturesque landscape.

New Zealand has always been a must-see destination because of its impressive glacial valleys as well as alpine lakes, but it gained even more popularity when it became the shooting grounds for *The Lord of The Rings* movie franchise. **Hobbiton** may be a great draw for fans, but now, the country is becoming even more known for its same-sex legislations that enable LGBT couples to enact marriage laws in New Zealand proper. This became the backdrop of an unforgettable wedding for Oly and Erron's clients and a ten-day adventure for the two.

Queenstown's suburban feel

A monument of William Gilbert Rees in the Queenstown city center

Lake Wanaka at Mount Aspiring National Park

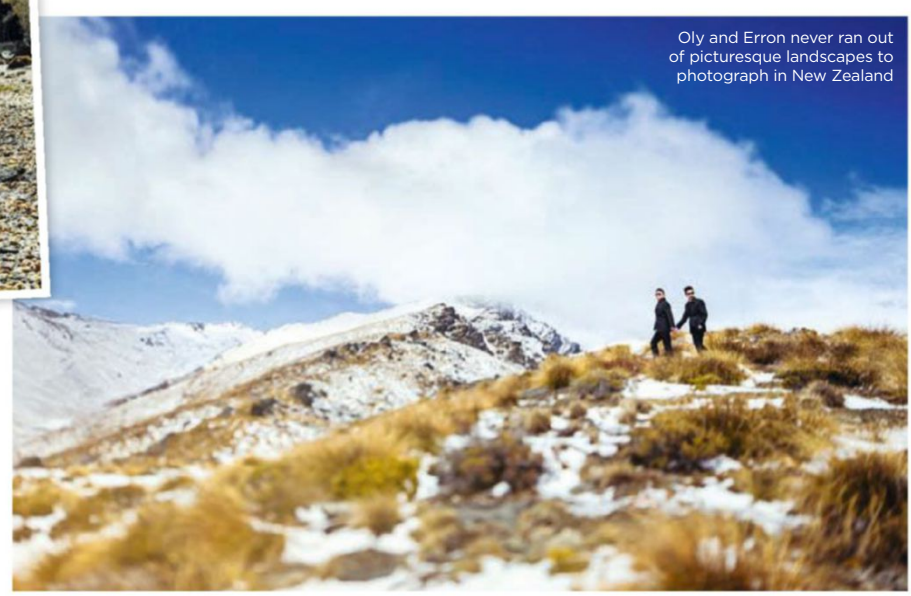
THE MAGIC: MARRY HIM ANYWAY

It would be the first time that Oly and Erron would shoot a same-sex couple and this added to the two's anxiety and excitement as they were planning the shoot. The lovers, Anthony Arevalo and Glenn Amurao, were based in Sydney, Australia where the LGBT are not allowed to marry. They decided to wed in the enchanting country of New Zealand.

Metro Photo's tagline, "For people who are harder to please" came into play for the couple, who didn't want to compromise anything when they gave their vows. "They wanted a wedding that would realize what they have always wanted," Oly says about the pair. This meant that they were willing to go by and far to make their dream nuptials happen. Even before heading to the land of the Kiwi, Oly and Erron met the couple in Pampanga where they shot the pre-wedding photos. They came up with a rough and tumble shoot, with the two riding a truck and looking casually tough against Pampanga's mountain range. The heat was on. It would prove to be the perfect contrast to the cool, dreamy background for the lovers who would be married in **Queenstown**.

That's exactly what they made happen in the quaint setting of **Thurlby Domain** in Queenstown, with rustic ruins and stables rampant with greenery that can't be found in their two hometowns of Sydney and Manila. With 18 of the couple's closest family and friends, Anthony and Glenn said "I do." The wedding shots captured the emotional, teary proceedings as the couple shared their vows. Their guests held hands, unable to hold back their own tears.

Having played witness to a love that defies the constrictions of society, Oly and Erron were touched not just by the couple's dedication to each other, but the outpour of support their friends and family have shared. Erron shares, "They wanted to make sure their friends were there, and that's what I appreciated about it." Erron remembers how the wedding minister notes that New Zealand isn't just an attraction for couples like Anthony and Glenn, it's one of the few countries where they can get married. "It's a call for equality."



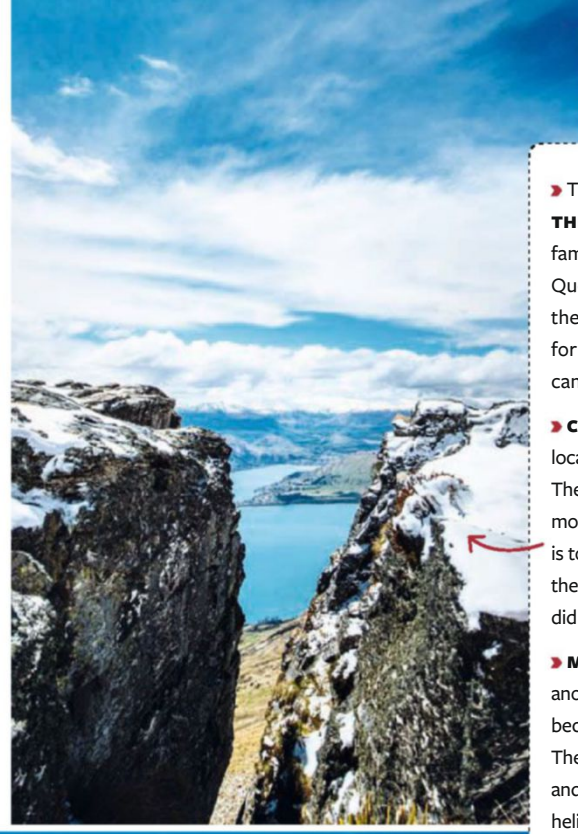
Oly and Erron never ran out of picturesque landscapes to photograph in New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MUST-SEE DESTINATION BECAUSE OF ITS IMPRESSIVE GLACIAL VALLEYS AS WELL AS ALPINE LAKES.

The beauty of New Zealand as seen above the clouds on a chopper ride

THE REMARKABLE QUEENSTOWN

It was spring when Anthony and Glenn were to be married, but a small miracle happened that would make their wedding shoot even more spectacular. The night before the wedding, snow fell, sprinkling on the mountains and lending **The Remarkables** a snowcapped winter feel that would add to the shoot's splendor. The weather and the place itself would prove to be kind to the two photographers-slash-adventurers and to the newlyweds with their small entourage. While it was happening, the setting was magical. The overcast of the bright blue waters that reflected that calm skies of the place was made even more memorable by the surrounding rolling hills that seemed well-kept because of the sheep, horses, and cows that would graze there. "When we got down from the mountains, *wala na 'yung* snow," Erron recounts. The warmth of spring melted the caps, making it feel like it snowed especially for the grooms.



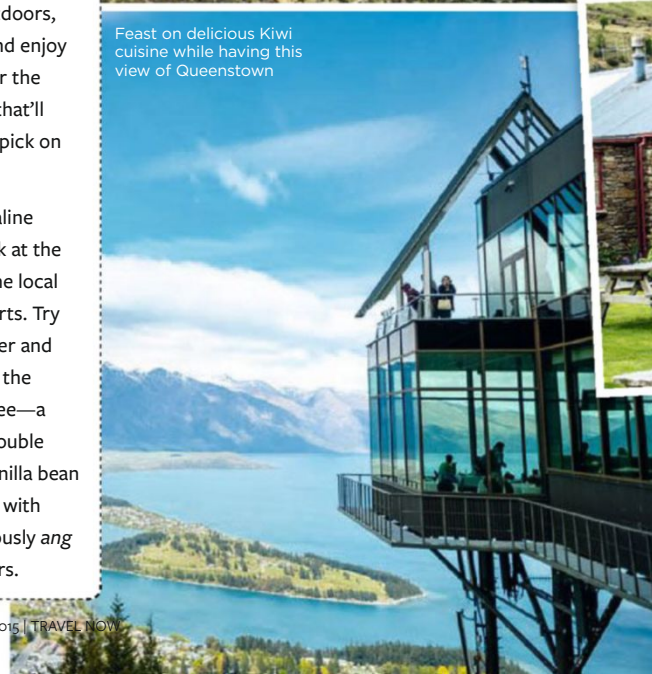
Another gorgeous aerial shot of Queenstown from the helicopter ride

GO TO

- The mountain range **THE REMARKABLES**, the famous terrains that make Queenstown iconic. Around the area, there are also offers for bungee jumping that you can avail of.
- **CECIL PEAK**, a mountain located in the Wakatipu Basin. The easiest way to visit the mountain range and the peaks is to ride a helicopter going there, which is what the team did to be able to shoot.
- **MOUNT ASPIRING** is another go-to place for shoots because of the background. The couple, along with Oly and Erron's crew, flew in a helicopter up to 200 meters to get the shot of Anthony and Glenn laying on the ledge against the incredible light blue waters of Lake Wakatipu, overlooking the mountain terrain. This all happened within a 15-minute timeframe.
- The clear waters of **LAKE WANAKA** are cast with reflections of the mountains that make up the view of Queenstown. Check out the pop-up stores that locals set up by the lake to sell local and quirky finds. Wool, stone and wood crafts can all be found there too.

EAT AT

- Head over to **FERGBURGER** for huge servings of burger made with prime New Zealand beef. If you want to keep enjoying the great outdoors, get your meal to go and enjoy a picnic. Watch out for the overly friendly ducks that'll go straight for you to pick on your fries.
- To keep your adrenaline up, take a coffee break at the posh **KOKO BLACK**, the local Tiffany & Co. of desserts. Try their chocolate sampler and what Oly describes as the best looking iced coffee—a concoction of fresh double shot espresso over vanilla bean ice cream and topped with full cream milk. "Seriously *ang ganda niya*," Oly swears.



Feast on delicious Kiwi cuisine while having this view of Queenstown

STAY IN

CARDRONA HOTEL, situated between Queenstown and Wanaka, is one of the most identifiable and iconic hotels in the country. It's been around for more than 200 years and dates back to the Cardrona Valley gold rush area.

THAT AUCKLAND SITUATION

In the largest city in New Zealand, there's so much to explore and discover. It's very different from the quieter, rural Queenstown. In here, sights are so abundant and activities from land to water and to air are all readily available.

Locals go the nearby parks to hang out

Knock on Bilbo Baggins' door in Hobbiton

THE RIGHT TO DRIVE

Do as Oly and Erron did—rent a car for the day and drive around downtown Auckland. "Driving around *pa lang*, if you look left and right *sobrang* amazing—*para siyang* wallpaper," Erron says. Take turns driving to savor in the view. Quick reminder: New Zealand is a right-hand drive country.

Ortolana is a garden-to-table chic bistro found in Auckland's CBD

Performance street artists are everywhere in Auckland

EAT AT

- **GIAPO HAUTE ICE CREAM** is one of a kind in its presentation of a delicious scoop. Your childhood favorite sweet is dressed up and designed to the whims of its founder, Giapo Grazioli. They even spray it gold.
- Try their local soft drink, **L&P (LEMON & PAEROA)**—"It's like Mountain Dew slash something amazing," says Oly.

GO TO

- Whether you're a fan of *The Lord of The Rings* or not, **HOBBITON** is worth the visit. Small scale and actual scale Hobbit houses populate the area. Insider information: Oly and Erron found out that there are five full scale Hobbit houses that haven't appeared in the current films yet.
- See the **GLOW WORMS**, luminous worms that you can view inside a cave or the forest. "They're very sensitive so you'll have to turn off any light and let your eyes adjust to see them," says Oly.
- The **MĀORI CULTURAL PERFORMANCE**, which shows an integral part of the Kiwi culture and their natives.

STAY IN

"**THE SKY TOWER** is like the Space Needle in Seattle—it's a landmark for the Auckland skyline," Oly says. It has two hotels and tourists can also bungee jump from its high ledge.

Some of the scenes from *Lord of the Rings* were shot at Arrow River

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

New Zealand is a haven for adrenaline junkies! Whether it's gorgeous landscapes or exhilarating adventures that make your heart beat faster, this country has it. Marvel at the many jaw-dropping sights that its mountain ranges and lakes provide (for starters, Queenstown has The Remarkables, Cecil Peak, Mount Aspiring and Lake Wanaka), and after that, if you still need that rush, try riding a jet boat or head over to Auckland and bungee jump off of the Sky Tower.

WHAT'S LEFT IN OLY AND ERRON'S MOSTLY FULFILLED BUCKET LIST?

OLY

- [x] New York, USA
- [x] Santorini, Greece
- [x] Venice, Italy
- [x] India
- [x] New Zealand
- [ ] Iceland for the Aurora Borealis
- [ ] Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia
- [ ] South Africa
- [ ] Antarctica

ERRON

- [x] Temples in Cambodia
- [x] New Zealand
- [x] Vietnam's Indochina Trail
- [x] Santorini, Grace
- [x] Rome, Italy
- [ ] South Africa
- [ ] Castles in Scotland
- [ ] South America
- [ ] Alaska
- [ ] Nepal

Lake Wakatipu is famous for adventure tourism—skiing, paragliding, bungee jumping, and more!

OF SENTIMENTAL VALUE

Oly collects Starbucks mugs from every place he goes to. Erron's remembrance is more permanent: he recently had a blank map outline tattooed on his left arm. His goal is to ink in every country he'll be visiting. It also has an accompanying chest tattoo with the word "Life" in different languages.

A dreamy drive around the city of Auckland

Take in the views of Cecil Peak and The Remarkables when you do a helicopter tour across Lake Wakatipu

A fire-eater in Auckland entertaining the guests passing by

There are more sheep than people in the whole of New Zealand

FOR MY FIRST HIKING TRIP IN TAIWAN, I LOST NO TIME IN GOING TO THE CENTRAL MOUNTAIN RANGE, HOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJESTIC SUMMITS. From the central city of **Taichung**, which is nearly at sea level, a bus ride took us to the highest point in the highway, which, at over 3000 meters, is even higher than Mount Apo, the Philippines' highest peak!

THE PEAKS OF HEHUANSHAN AND THE DEPTHS OF TAROKO GORGE

My first destination was **Hehuanshan**, which translates to "Mountain of Joy." Staying on a mountain lodge for the night, I woke up early morning to climb the 3421-meter **East Peak**. As the sun rose, I saw the mountain covered with the same golden-brown dwarf bamboo that also covers the summit of Mount Pulag. As I approached the peak, I was treated to a view of the various mountains of the range. A joyous sight indeed.

From the lofty peaks of Hehuanshan, I took another dramatic bus ride, this time, featuring a 3000-meter descent through narrow mountain roads to reach **Taroko Gorge**, perhaps the most popular natural attraction in all of Taiwan. To have an up close view of this wonder, we took the famous **Shakadang Trail**. The rocks hung above us, and up high stood the misty mountains. The thousand-meter heights and depths of the gorge, as well as the endless moss-covered underclings along clear rivers, are unforgettable sights.

AUTUMN IN XUESHAN

In the autumn, I returned to do a three-day hike up **Xueshan** (which literally means Snow Mountain). At 3886 meters, it is the second highest mountain in Taiwan. With well-maintained trails surrounded by juniper, spruce, pine, and other beautiful trees—some covered with lichen—trekking was a delight in itself. The **Black Forest**, with its majestic Taiwan fir trees, was mesmerizing! Once again, the slopes were covered with dwarf bamboo. Everything was just surrounded on all sides with mountains upon mountains.

THE FORMIDABLE HOLY RIDGE

The following year, I came back to do the **Holy Ridge**, a six-day traverse through nine of the highest mountains in Taiwan, starting with Snow Mountain, and ending in **Dabajianshan.** This is considered the most challenging hike in Taiwan, and Taiwanese hikers even have a saying that you cannot marry until you have done Holy Ridge—an allusion to the sheer difficulty of the trek, which has claimed the lives of some hikers. But it was also one of the most breathtaking treks I've ever done! Hiking up the seemingly endless scree slopes and precarious, rocky ridges of some of Taiwan's highest peaks will always be a highlight of my mountain memories. "I am physically and mentally exhausted!" I wrote in my blog after the hike, adding: "But it was worth it!"

TAKING IT EASY AROUND TAIPEI

Just a few weeks later, I was back again for a more relaxing trip to explore the day hikes around Taipei. **Mount Qixing** in **Yangmingshan National Park** is the highest within the city, and is just a 45-minute bus ride away from the MRT. The traverse of this mountain took us just four hours and gave us views of pine forests, grasslands, and, on the other side of the peak, even some volcanic vents! Like the Philippines, Taiwan is, after all, part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, which also explains its interesting landscapes and rock formations. The next day, I climbed **Guanyin Mountain**, which also had some nice views of the city, but this time from another vantage point. Even more accessible than those two was my hike on the third day: **Four Beasts Mountain**, which you can trek directly from an MRT station!

What these mountains have in common is a view of Taipei's skyline, with the iconic Taipei 101 tower. On clear days, their peaks also offer a view of the high mountains—an

The iconic Taipei 101 tower is one landmark that you can see from many of the city's fine mountains

MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES IN TAIWAN

With over two hundred peaks rising to impressive heights of over 3000 meters, **Taiwan** is a paradise for mountaineers, offering world-class hikes that can take you through a diversity of environments—from scenic coastal trails to spectacular alpine summits, and between them, forests of bamboo and pine, highland meadows, and landscape of endless rock. With this, mountaineer **Gideon Lasco** shares his mountaineering experience

photographed by GIDEON LASCO

The scree slopes and rock formations of Taiwan's mountains make for dramatic scenery—and a challenging hike

I NEVER IMAGINED THE WONDERS THAT LAY AHEAD OF ME IN ITS BEAUTIFUL TRAILS AND LOFTY MOUNTAINS.

invitation to go further. But for those just wanting to take a break from work or make a quick sidetrip, the day hikes would suffice. Indeed, these day hikes are good for those who might not be heavily experienced hikers.

Actually, Taiwan has hikes for all levels of difficulty, and for whatever length of time you have—be it three hours, three days, or even three weeks (yes, the trails in the Central Mountain Range are interconnected so you can traverse the whole island!). And most of the tourist spots have trails just around the corner. For instance, while visiting Sun Moon Lake, we ended up doing a 10-hour ascent to the 2056-meter **Shuisheishan**. This impromptu hike became memorable when we had to pass by an eerie bamboo forest at night.

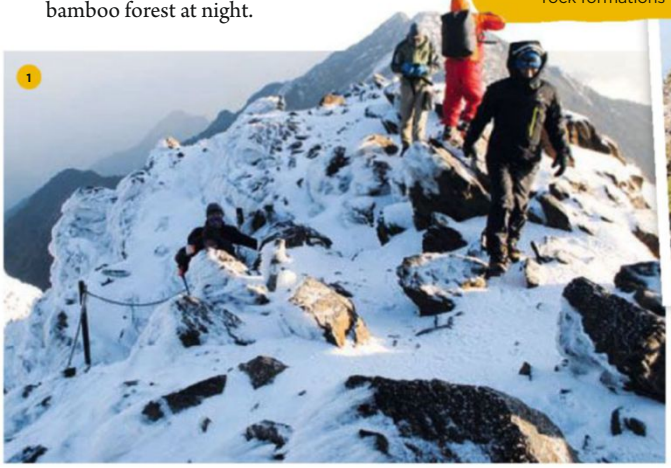
TAKING ON THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN EAST ASIA

On my sixth and latest trip to Taiwan, I finally managed to climb **Yushan** (or Jade Mountain), Taiwan's highest at 3952 meters—almost a thousand meters higher than our Mount Apo! As the highest mountain in east Asia, this mountain attracts a lot of would-be trekkers, and to limit the number of climbers per day to less than 100, one must participate in a lottery 45 days before your planned hike. Our hike coincided with a Taiwanese holiday and there were over 800 applicants! Fortunately, our group of nine managed to be picked. I guess you could say that Jade Mountain is a hike that requires a little bit of luck!

We were hiking at the tail-end of winter, and the snow required us to wear use crampons. It was snowing on our first day, and had the inclement weather continued, our hike would have been aborted. But our streak of luck held, and we were treated to a sunny day. At the summit, the snowcapped peaks of the Central Mountain Range were unveiled before our eyes. The more you climb, the more you realize how many more mountains you have to climb.

When I first came to Taiwan in 2011, I never imagined the wonders that lay ahead of me in its beautiful trails and lofty mountains. Four years and six hiking trips later, I am eagerly planning my next hike there. Surely another unforgettable adventure awaits!

The six-day Holy Ridge hike—perhaps Taiwan's most difficult—features steep, precarious trails on stunning bonsai forests and endless rock formations



1 The sunrise reveals the snowcapped peaks of the Central Mountain Range **2** Atop the fragile rocks on the North Peak of Cilai Ridge, one of Taiwan's challenging hikes **3** Trekking in the temperate forests of Snow Mountain, with its lovely trees and well-established trails

THE CILAI RIDGE CHALLENGE

My fifth trip was a return to the Hehuanshan area, as it is also the starting-off point for another of Taiwan's difficult hikes, **Cilai Ridge**. Nicknamed Black Cilai because of the dark rocks that distinguish it from surrounding mountains, Cilai Ridge is similar to Holy Ridge in that it has scree slopes, narrow ridges, and steep, precarious trails. But with it taking just three days, it turned out to be much easier than Holy Ridge, but still a tough climb.

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

Just a few hours' flight away from the Philippines, what Taiwan offers is not only a multitude of hiking possibilities for expert mountaineers and casual hikers alike, but also the chance to experience the mountains as a journey through four seasons: from the winter snow, the blossoms of spring and summer, and the crimson leaves of autumn. The trails are so well-maintained and easy to follow that you can go without a guide, as long as you're prepared and know what to expect.

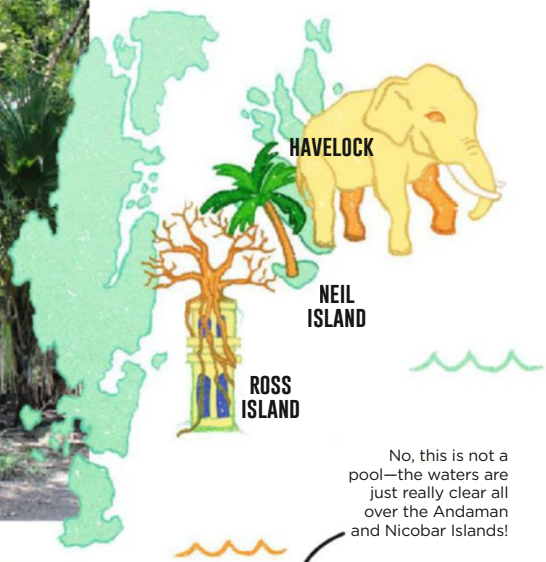
The rain is not your best friend on the island but the raindrops look stunning as if performing a spectacular dance on the surface of the sea

INDIA'S TROPICAL SECRETS

A ticket to **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** is the only thing that separates you from discovering the lush treasures of the Eastern Indian Ocean. **Florian Efinger** explores the ruins, beaches, and jungles, one paradise at a time

photographed by FLORIAN EFINGER *and* NILS DIECKMANN
illustrated by KIMCHI LEE

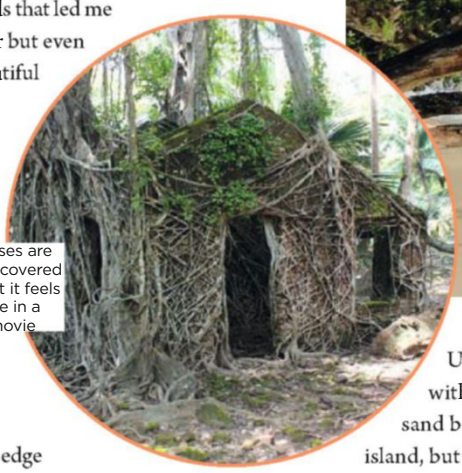
Nature takes over in Ross Island



ISLAND #1
THE CONQUEROR'S LEFTOVERS

Ross Island is the Rome of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It used to be the seat of power during the British regime. Think of London and you can imagine how grand the brick buildings looked like before an earthquake struck in 1941, causing the people to abandon the island. Today, you can see the power of nature as it has taken over the ruins. The highlight was the tower of the island's only church. The roots slithered up to the church tower with the canopy of leaves spreading at the top. Other buildings have actually been taken over by the trees completely.

Have you ever seen a tree shaped like a house? I did while I was walking along the secret roads that led me to creepier but even more beautiful buildings.



Other houses are completely covered in roots that it feels like you're in a horror movie

Along the edge of the island, several fortifications can still be seen. Some of the bunkers are even intact and accessible. In one of the bunkers, a room has even become home to bats. Exploring with caution is key, but should anything happen to you, there is a hospital on the other side of the island where you can seek treatment.

Unlike in most museums or ruins, there are no boundaries—you can go anywhere. There are no dangerous animals. Instead, there are squirrels, peafowl, and deer. It is even possible to play with them, but be careful of spending too much time with the animals, as you might miss the ferry, and you don't want to get stuck in the island overnight.

No, this is not a pool—the waters are just really clear all over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands!

In Havelock, your definition of personal space will change—the beaches are almost empty!

ISLAND #2
BEACH, PLEASE

Undoubtedly, **Havelock Island**, with its shores of wide white sand beaches, is the most touristy island, but it doesn't mean that there are no secluded places. There is a rumor that you can swim with the elephants at **Radhanagar** (locally called Beach Number Seven)—but unfortunately this is not true. There is one domesticated elephant living in Havelock's first resort, but since the elephant has gotten old, it has made Radhanagar its retirement home, making daily walks near the beach.

The sand in Radhanagar is not as fine as Boracay's but you will easily find your own spot. Most of the tourists in Havelock are Indians, and it seemed that they prefer the closest spot to inland. When I first arrived at Radhanagar around 5 PM, I was so excited to take a swim that I just ran into the water. All of a sudden I heard a whistle blowing and one of the guards signaled to me to get out of the water.

Most of the tourists and restaurants are located near Vijaynagar Beach or Beach Number Five. Walking along this strip of beach is amazing. At first I started to pass by a mangrove-filled beach, then it changed to a rocky beach, and then to a fine sand beach, and finally I ended up in a totally remote beach. It took me a long time to do this, but who's checking the time?

The beautiful canopy of leaves on top of the church tower

GEOGRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

Although the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are geographically closer to Myanmar and Thailand, these islands are part of India. The gateways to the capital, Port Blair, are Calcutta and Chennai. After your arrival, you get a special visa for the islands, unless you already applied for it with your current Indian visa. Because some of the islands were just explored a couple of years ago, some restricted areas where the indigenous people live are strictly prohibited to tourists.

The locals in Neil Island use ropes to climb the coconut trees

FERRY TALE

To commute from island to island is quite complicated. If you don't have much time to go around the islands, it is practical to book all your ferry tickets in advance. Quite often, the system is down and that means waiting or testing your patience.

If you go to Little Andaman, always have a one- or two-day buffer because the ferry schedule depends on the weather. On Neil Island, however, it's only possible to book a ferry for the same day. There are other options, like taking night ferries, private ferries, and proper cruise ships with cabins—but getting a ticket on these will depend on your luck as well.

Need a ride? These rickshaw drivers will take you almost anywhere

ISLAND #3 BACK TO SCHOOL

When I entered the port in **Neil Island**, I felt like a piece of meat being fed to a lion's cage as rickshaw drivers and hotel owners started grabbing my attention. As with every other pre-island exploration, I never forget to try their *chai* and *samosa* at the local market. When I started going around the island with my scooter, I kept my eyes open for hidden tracks that lead to unexpected places.

Once, I ended up at a farm and had a nice chat with a local who gave me additional information on where to go. Around the time I was in Neil Island, the Indians were celebrating a Hindi festival called Diwali. I was able to sit with the locals while watching different shows and also see kids lighting up fireworks.

Doing the jungle tour in Neil Island took me to a different kind of school. I learned a lot about the local flora and fauna and was impressed by the massive trees along the way. All of a sudden I felt tiny standing next to their roots. The final destination of this tour was, of course, a remote footprint-free beach that made me feel like Neil Armstrong when he first set on the moon. In this tour, I also learned two important things about island life—how to climb a coconut tree and how to open a coconut. This jungle was the best classroom I ever had.

The panoramic view from the top of the lighthouse

ISLAND #4 SOMEBODY OUT THERE?

Little Andaman Island is a bit isolated from the rest of the islands I've visited. It recently just got developed so when I drove around, there was no other foreigner besides me—just locals enjoying their non-touristy and non-commercialized lives. When I got to the beaches, I barely even saw people. Suddenly, I was running to beach and diving into the water without anyone trying to stop me. The waves and the current were strong though, so I stayed close to the shore.

As with every other island, commuting around the Little Andaman is best made via scooter, but it's not without its cons, especially when doing it on a wet tropical environment. I was stuck in the middle of a betel nut plantation and tried to find shelter under the pouring rain when luckily, somebody offered me a stay in her house.

Back on the road, you see lots of people carrying fruits. And if you are into bananas like me, welcome to heaven. I ate one of the best bananas I've had in Little Andaman.

When in Little Andaman, don't miss the lighthouse. I crossed bumpy and muddy roads to get there but it was worth it. A keeper offered to take me up to the 50-meter lighthouse for a small fee. The way up was stressful as I was afraid of heights, but the view was stunning: untouched nature as far as the eye can see. For me, this is what Little Andaman is all about.

There are two things you should bring with you to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—a hammock and a book. The first one to keep you comfortable in your sleep and the latter to keep you entertained in the remoteness of it all. And the rest? Just leave it to nature.

The jungle isn't made for cars

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

It is almost impossible to connect to the digital world in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, making it easier to appreciate the rawness of nature. Without the help of any travel guide, hopping on a scooter and not actually knowing where to go, you go back to the true essence of adventure. At the end of the day, you are forced to follow your instinct in the exotic Indian outdoors.

ONE ISLAND AT A TIME

In the south of Thailand lie the provinces of **Krabi**, **Phuket**, and **Phang Nga**, where the islands seem endless, as do the number of pristine beaches to explore. **Kristine Agustin** went on a five-day adventure to see exactly what the region has to offer

photographed by KRISTINE AGUSTIN
additional information written by MARBEE SHING-GO *and* KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO

You can swim and kayak in the calm waters of Monkey Beach

SOUTHERN THAILAND ISN'T EXACTLY ON TOP OF THE PLACES PEOPLE HAVE IN MIND WHEN THEY CHOOSE THAT COUNTRY AS A DESTINATION. People know of Bangkok and look forward to shopping and eating there. But areas south of the capital are famous for their beaches—and more.

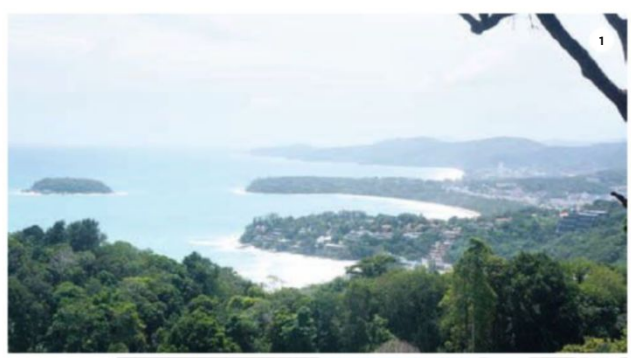
My friend and I were looking to temporarily escape our busy lives, and since we'd already been traveling across the Philippines, we decided to try a different scenery and a different culture—so we booked a flight to Phuket. It was also my first non-business trip outside of the country, and the laid-back atmosphere of the region was perfect.

1 The stunning sunset view from Patong Beach
2 Don't forget to drop by Wat Chalong, the majestic and sacred temple in Phuket

You can go straight to the **Phi Phi Islands**, part of **Krabi** province, in the Andaman Sea, from Phuket International Airport; that's why we chose to wait for morning when our flight arrived a little past midnight. At the Sea Angel Port, you'll board a big boat that will take you to the biggest island, **Ko Phi Phi Don**. When we arrived, it was raining hard and the Andaman Sea was rough—but once we reached Tonsai Pier and saw the stunning rock formations, towering limestone cliffs, and breathtaking beaches, it was worth it.

We originally planned to head to Ko Phi Phi Ley, an island south of Ko Phi Phi Don where the 2000 movie *The Beach* was shot. However, once we reached the open sea, the waves started to become unpleasant again, so our captain decided to head back to Ko Phi Phi Don. We chose to explore **Monkey Beach** instead. This fascinating beach, located near the pier, is filled with monkeys—but tourists are always advised to be careful, as some of the monkeys have been reported to be agressive. Whatever you do, do not feed them. The waters here are also calm enough for swimming.

After returning to Tonsai Pier, we decided it was time to check in at our resort, **Phi Phi Banyan Villa**. On the way there, we noticed something interesting: there were no concrete roads—only paved sidewalks for people to walk on.



1 Karon View Point is known locally as Khao Saam Haad (or Three Beaches Hill)
2 Phi Phi Banyan Villa: A beautiful resort to relax in

When we arrived at the resort, we were taken aback by its quaintness of it. The villa and its compound was huge, and our room was situated near the pool. We loved how it was cozy, spacious, and beautiful.

TAKING IN THE TOURISTY THINGS

Although the weather didn't cooperate—it was cloudy and windy, and the rolling waves were loud—it didn't matter when we reached the other side of the island. We were greeted by a long sandbar and a view of **Loh Dalum Bay**. The tide was so low that locals were playing football on the sandbar! We decided to take a different route on our way back to the resort, and along the way, we saw restaurants, resorts, inns, and even dormitories. Most of the restaurants in the area served European food with some Thai favorites; you could go just about anywhere and find that the dishes are delicious.

Don't forget to get a Thai massage from a local masseur. Even though it was a very hard kind of massage—I thought my bones were going to crack!—it was very relaxing, and the payoff came in the intense relief and feeling of bodily kinks worked out afterwards.

If you feel like exploring, head on over to **Long Beach**.

True to its name, it's a longer stretch of sandbar compared to Loh Dalum. The resorts and hotels along the sandbars of Long Beach are bigger and offer a more luxe experience for those who don't want to rough it.

RETURN TO PHUKET

In Phuket, it was an hour's ride from **Phuket Old Town** to our hotel, Rayaburi Hotel Patong, which is just a block away from the famous Patong Beach. However, (literal) red flags all throughout the sands of the beach meant no swimming. You can choose to stroll around **Patong City** instead, particularly **Bangla Road**, which is the center of nightlife in Patong. Expect to meet people from all over the world here.

After a night of partying, more red flags met us on a city tour that took us to **Karon Beach**, along with strong waves and a high tide. If the same thing happens to you, you can nonetheless enjoy a view of the waves, the sand on your feet, and people-watching.

Try heading for **Kata Beach** instead, which is famous for its fine sand and its surfer-friendly waves. If you're lucky, like we were, there won't be a lot of people when you're there and you can have the beach practically to yourself—perfect for those who want to avoid the noise and crowds of Patong Beach. When we were there, we were able to watch a group of people enjoying surf lessons.

Karon View Point is also worth a visit; after all, it's one of the most visited viewing areas points in Phuket. From up in the hills, you can see the beaches of **Karon**, **Kata**, and **Kata Noi**—which is only accesible if you book a hotel in the area. The view from the top is captivating.

For more spectacular views, there's **Promthep Cape**, from which you can see nearby islands, including Bon, Koh Kaeo Yai, and Koh Kaeo Noi. It's also famous for the spectacular sunset view it offers, so expect it to get packed in the late afternoon to early evening.

1 The pink sands of Rawai is a combination of sand and coral **2** Koh Khao Phing Kan or James Bond Island, a part of the Ao Phang Nga National Park where the islands have limestone karst towers

Of course we went back to see Patong Beach when the red flags went down; as we didn't get to see the sunset in Promthep Cape, we waited for it at Patong Beach instead. Expect the beach to be packed with people enjoying the sand, the waters, and the kayaking, parasailing, and other available watersports.

ISLAND-HOPPING

Want to visit **James Bond Island**? Take a ferry boat to **Koh Khao Phing Kan**, which earned the nickname after the release of *The Man With the Golden Gun* movie. Its most distinct features are the limestone cliffs that rise practically vertically out of the water.

A word of advice for when you board the ferry: be sure to choose seats at the front of the boat for the best views of **Phang Nga Bay**, so you won't miss any of the many different islands—said to be over a hundred—that are part of the **Ao Phang Nga National Park** as the tour slowly unveils them.

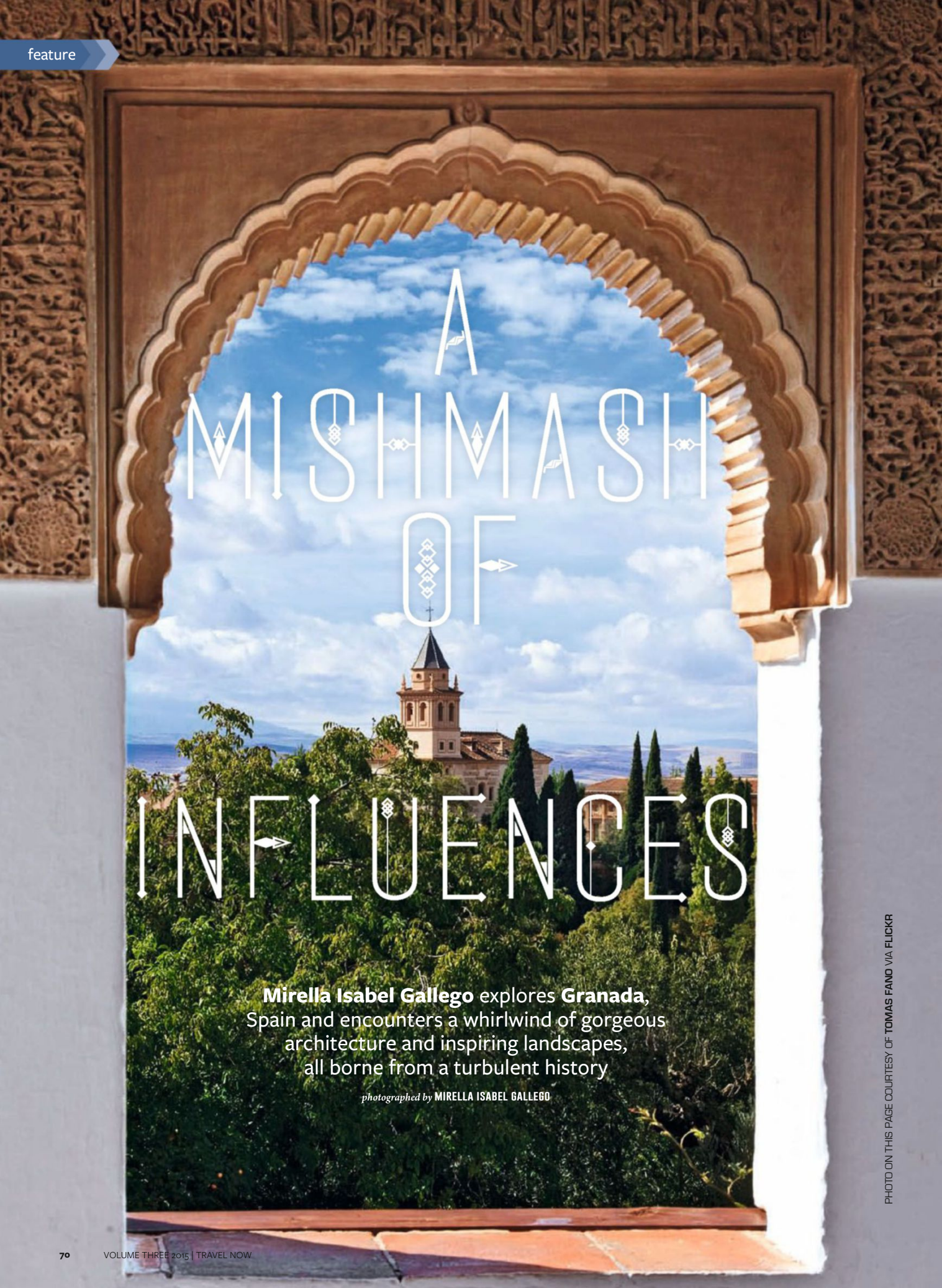
Expect tourists to flock to James Bond Island. We chose to have our photo taken with the famous tall islet called **Khao Tapu**. Walk across a rocky cliff to get to the other side of the island, where you can explore a cave with stalactites, then come back to enjoy a sumptuous Thai buffet lunch as part of your tour.

The next stop is **Koh Hong**, which brings you back to Krabi. You can kayak in its waters and admire its rich rock and limestone formations and mangrove forests. Why not end your adventure at **Lawa Island**, where you can pretend to be a spelunker as you explore its rock formations and caves? We chose to go to a secluded sand bar where we swam and kayaked to our hearts' content.

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

Phuket, Krabi, and Phang Nga are becoming famous for their islands and beaches, providing an alternative to the busy streets of Bangkok and the whirlwind of shopping people associate with the city. You won't run out of beaches and islands to discover, and while the locals speak very little English, they are very friendly and accommodating.

A 66-foot tall islet in James Bond Island featured in the movie *The Man with the Golden Gun*



A MISHMASH OF INFLUENCES

Mirella Isabel Gallego explores **Granada**, Spain and encounters a whirlwind of gorgeous architecture and inspiring landscapes, all borne from a turbulent history

photographed by MIRELLA ISABEL GALLEGO

PHOTO ON THIS PAGE COURTESY OF **TOMAS FANO** VIA **FLICKR**

IN THE SOUTH OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA, IN THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF ANDALUSIA, IS THE PROVINCE OF GRANADA. Nestled in the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, between the two hills separated by the Darro Valley, Granada is believed to have been named after the most abundant fruit in the region, pomegranates—which in Spanish, actually translates to, what else, *granada*. Known for its rich culture and history, Granada was the seat of the Iberian settlement in Spain, falling to the Roman Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II and Isabella I in 1492.

Granada today is one of the most visited areas in Spain and is synonymous with the majestic and historical fortress **Alhambra**. Having been to Cordoba and Seville, both cities in the Andalusian Province, Granada has always been on our family bucket list, as this historic city sets itself apart with its unique architecture, art, history and melting pot of cultures.

There is more to the city than the Alhambra. There is so much to see and do that you don't know where to start. You could spend days exploring one section of a district and discover something new each time. To get a better taste of what Granada is really like, we booked a hotel in the old Arab quarter of the city known as **El Albayzín**. At the height of its splendor, El Albayzín featured mosques, luxurious *carmenes* (or large mansions), public baths, and numerous wells. However, the re-conquest of the area saw many mosques demolished, with churches built in their place. As the Arabs were driven out of the area, many luxurious *carmenes* were then occupied by wealthy Christians. Now, these mansions have been converted to hotels. Having settled into our hotel, which had a great view of the Alhambra, we decided it was time to explore the city.

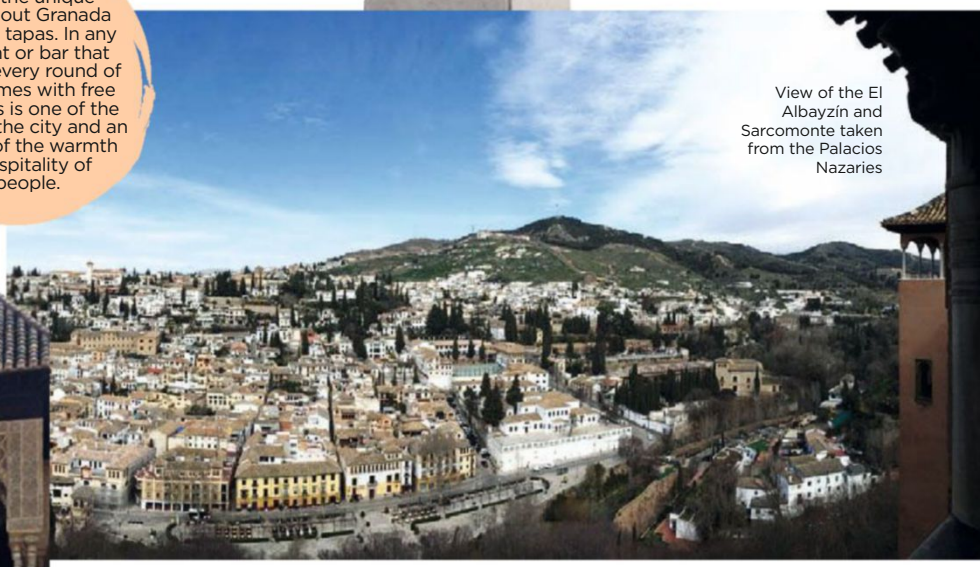
The best way to begin touring Granada is to do an overview of the area on the city's hop-on

The dome and main altar of the Catedral de Granada

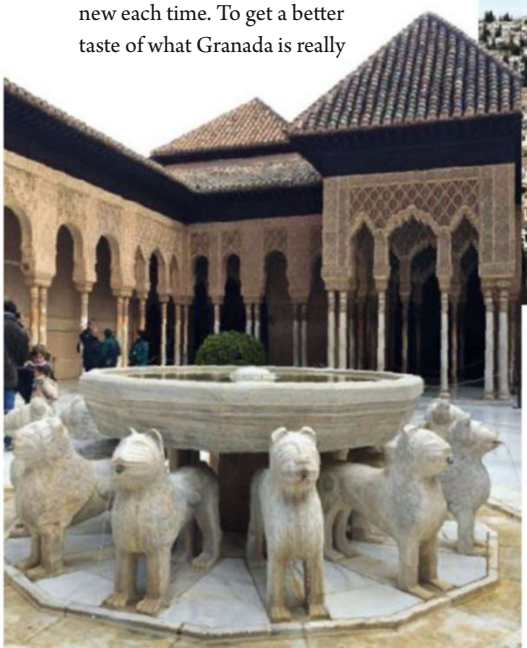
1 Local produce in Granada
2 Pastries displayed by the window

A statue of the Last King of the Roma at the entrance to the main road of the Sacromonte

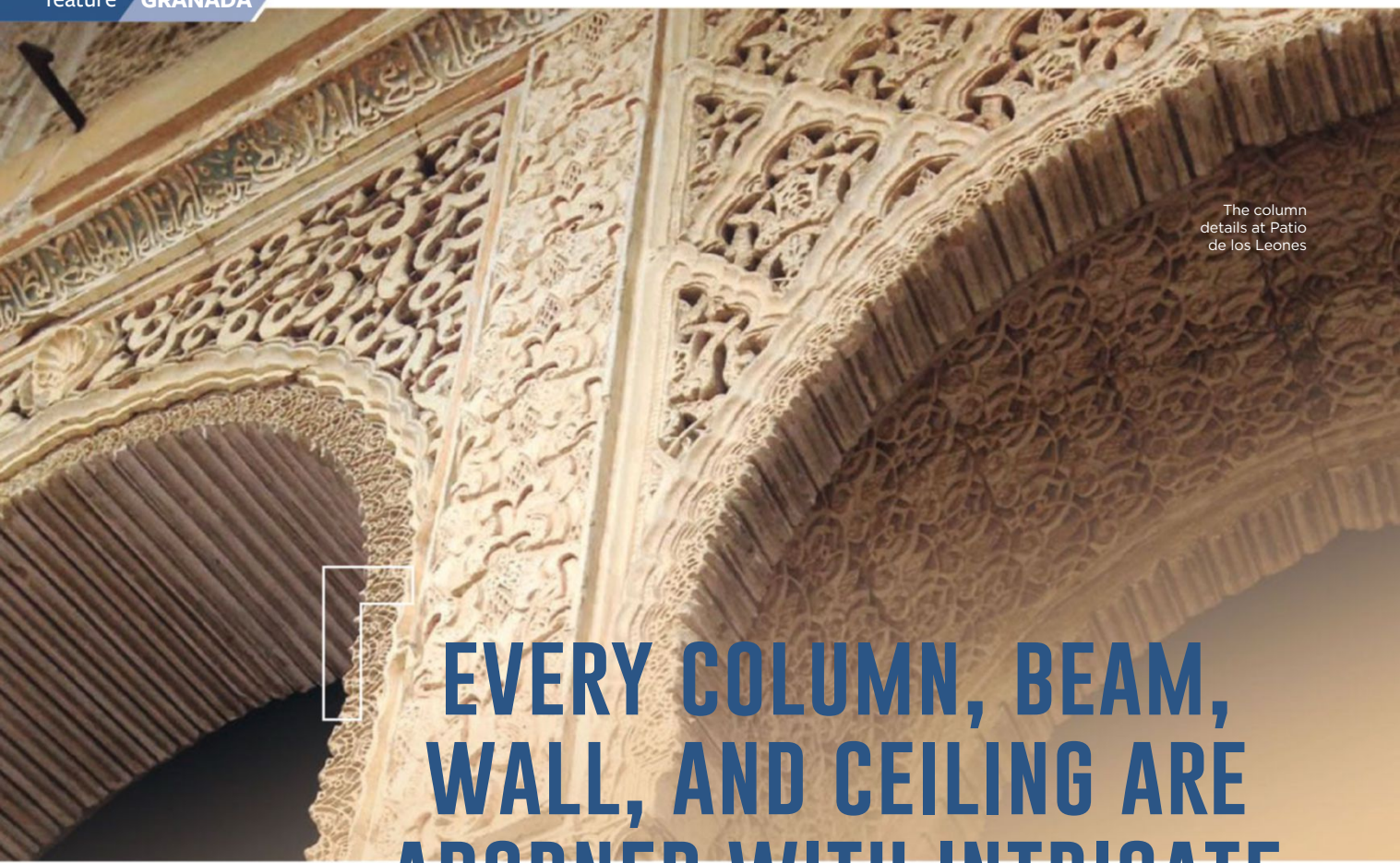
One of the unique things about Granada is the free tapas. In any restaurant or bar that you visit, every round of drinks comes with free tapas. This is one of the charms of the city and an example of the warmth and hospitality of its people.



View of the El Albayzín and Sarcomonte taken from the Palacios Nazaries



Patio de los Leones (or Court of the Lions) fountain—one the most iconic structures in the whole Alhambra. The White Marble surrounded by a dodecagonal shaped basin is one of the most important examples of Muslim sculptures



The column details at Patio de los Leones

EVERY COLUMN, BEAM, WALL, AND CEILING ARE ADORNED WITH INTRICATE DETAILS SYMBOLIZING THE MAJESTY OF THE NASRID DYNASTY.

hop-off tour train, which starts off at **Plaza Nueva** and goes around the whole city, stopping at major landmarks and must-see places. At any point in the route, you can get off and explore the different districts. The train is very helpful especially for stops in the hills, where walking up is a challenge. The two important districts in the historical area of Granada—El Albayzín and Sacromonte—are separated by the **Darro River**, which runs through the city. These two areas have significantly influenced the city and the people.

Our first stop was **Sacromonte**. In the eighteenth century, Roma people (some call them gypsies, but Roma is the preferred term) settled in caves along slopes of the **Cerro de San Miguel**, located at the edge of Camino del Sacromonte. They are one of the few groups that have been able to preserve their racial identity and today, they are honored with a statue of the last Roma King of Granada, Chorrohumo, at the entrance of Sacromonte. Winding through the area provides a glimpse into the life in Sacromonte—along what has naturally become the street are cave houses carved out organically from the hill, each adorned with art and artifacts signifying their racial identity. On top of one of the hills (which is quite a trek up but well worth it) is the **Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte**, which has a stunning view of the Alhambra. The museum replicates the lives in the caves where many Roma people found sanctuary during times of conquest. Many of the cave houses today are still inhabited by locals. A must-see traditional Flamenco show is also put on in this area.

About 10 minutes from Sacromonte, down the narrow, cobblestone roads, is the **Catedral de Granada**, the **Cathedral of the Incarnation**. This stunning and exquisite church was the site of an ancient mosque. The cathedral was finished in a mix of Gothic and Renaissance Style. The grand

Tile and wall etching details

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

Whether it's hiking up the steep, winding, narrow streets of El Albayzín or walking through the beautiful gardens and grounds of the Alhambra, Granada is not short of experience of architecture, history and culture nestled into a breathtaking landscape and the great outdoors. If you happen to travel to Granada in the winter or spring, you should marvel at the snowcapped mountains of the Sierra Navarra, where you can also enjoy skiing or a view of the Andalusian province.

The Patio de los Leones is one of the most famous areas of the Alhambra

altar is surrounded by several chapels where many Catholic kings were buried. You can spend hours wandering around the church, looking at the meticulously thought-out details and see for yourself how the Castiles created a monument that would demonstrate their power and influence.

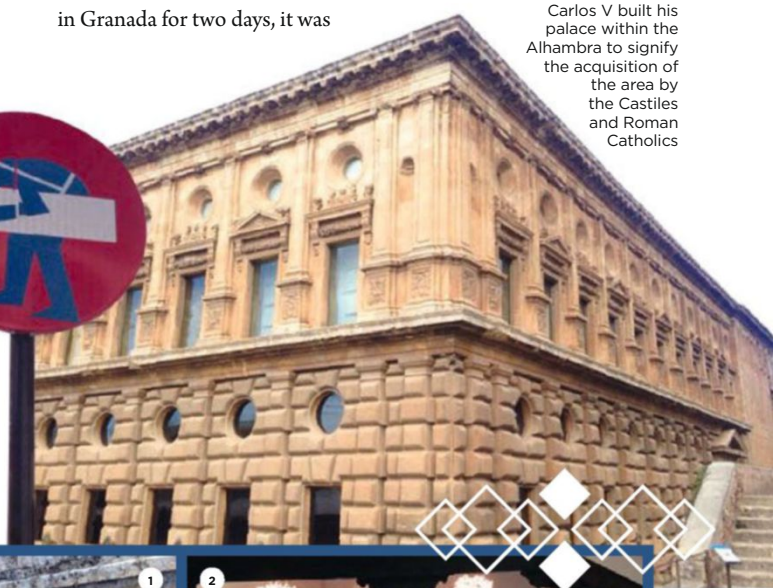
The next day was dedicated to exploring and touring the grounds of the famous Alhambra. This large complex of historic buildings and gardens is the highlight of any trip to Granada and a place that one cannot miss. The Alhambra is the epitome of the Iberian-Castile life. I highly recommend wearing a good pair of walking shoes and buying tickets online to save time and to reserve a slot to visit the Nasrid Palaces, which is opened only to a limited number of visitors during the day. The Alhambra complex was built on a strategic location, with a view of the whole city. It is clear why those who founded the city of Granada chose this spot to build the fortress meant to safeguard the whole area.

The 13th century marked the beginning of the glorious period known as the Nasrid Dynasty, when construction of the many palaces and gardens in Alhambra was started. Under the orders of Carlos V in the 14th century, many of the palaces and areas of the Alhambra were destroyed to make way for a palace for the Catholic monarch.

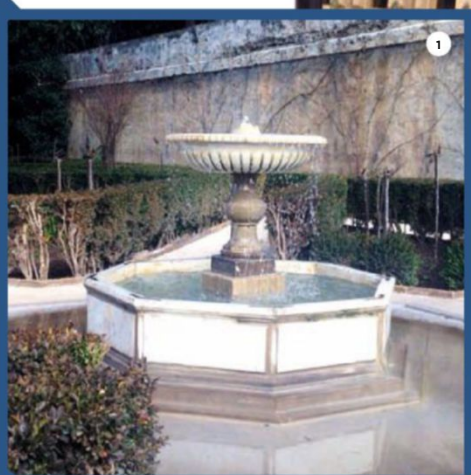
There are very few words to describe the feeling you have while walking through the complex of the Alhambra—from the beautiful gardens of the Generalife where the Iberian Monarchs went to relax and the Nasrid Palace where every column, beam, wall, and ceiling are adorned with intricate details symbolizing the majesty of the Nasrid Dynasty to the Palace of Carlos V which was built to tower and dominate the buildings to signify Spain's success in the acquisition of the area from the Arabs.

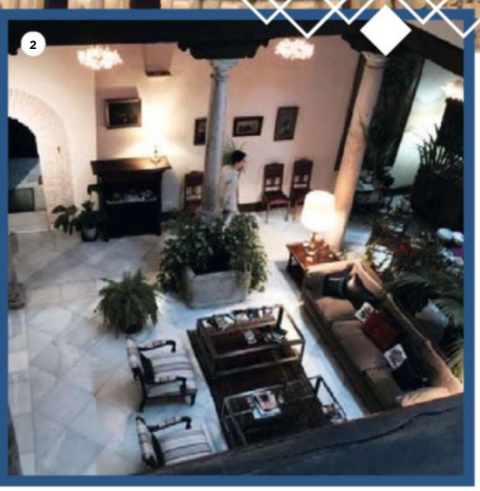
Even if we were only in Granada for two days, it was definitely far from a letdown. There are so much to see and many stories to tell about this beautiful and unique place in Spain. From contrasting landscape, culture, history, architecture, and art, this city influenced by many is gorgeous in several different ways.

The artistry and quirks of Granada—a "No Entry" street sign along the streets of El Albayzín



Carlos V built his palace within the Alhambra to signify the acquisition of the area by the Castiles and Roman Catholics





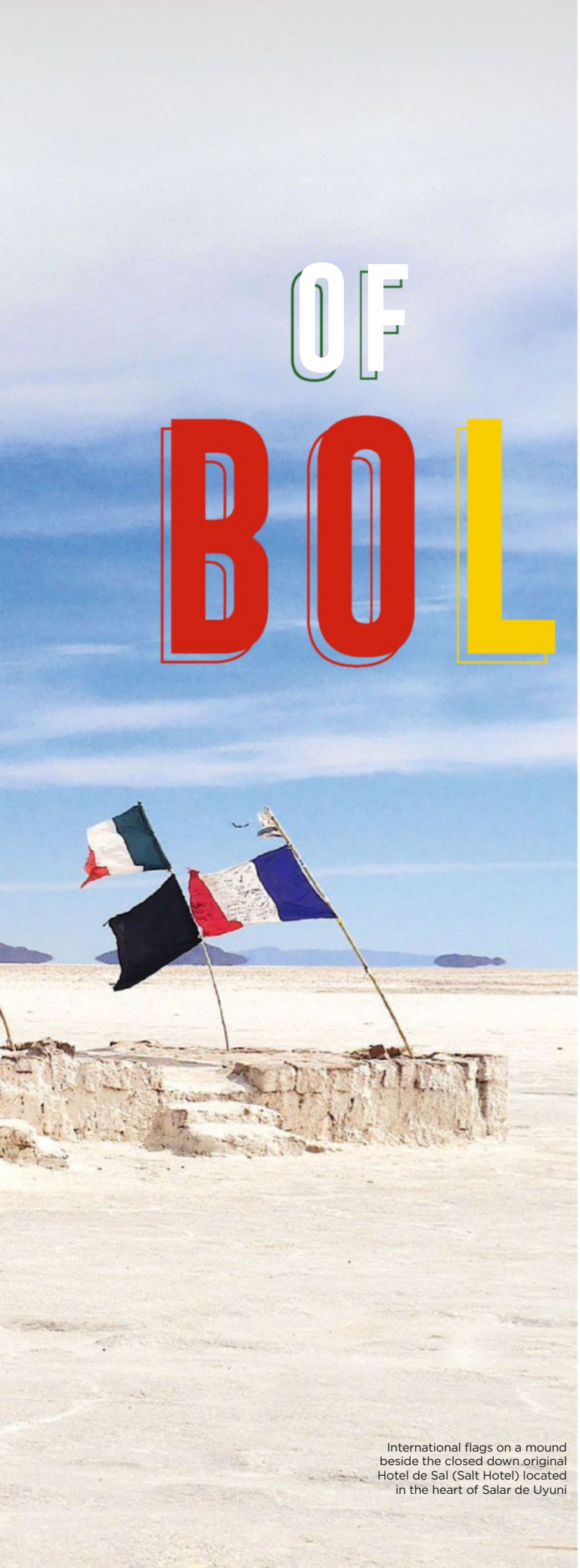
1 A fountain in one of the Areas of the Generalife **2** View of the courtyard of one of the *carmenes* in El Albayzín area, which has been converted into a hotel

THE COLORS

While known for the Salar de Uyuni, the largest salt flats and mirror in the world, **Bolivia** has more on its palette than just white. A splash of red and green lagoons, specks of wild pink flamingos, and strokes of seven colors on a mountain await the eager traveler

written by JAMIE LUY
photographed by SHERICK SY

OF BOLIVIA



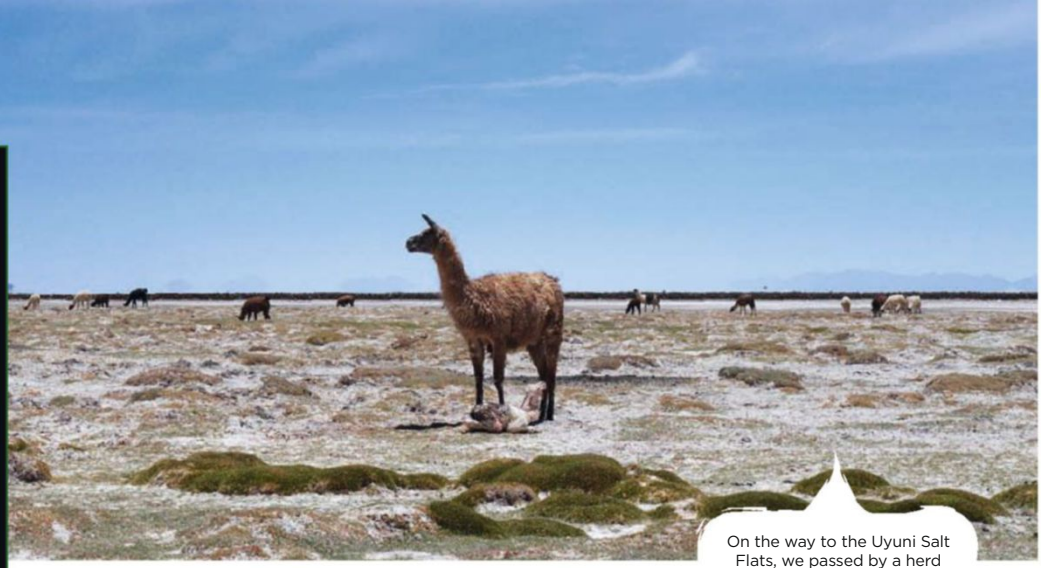
International flags on a mound beside the closed down original Hotel de Sal (Salt Hotel) located in the heart of Salar de Uyuni

IT WAS IN NOVEMBER WHEN WE TOOK A 10-HOUR OVERNIGHT BUS RIDE OPERATED BY TODO TURISMO FROM LA PAZ TO UYUNI. Though dinner and breakfast were served and seats were comfortable, the bumpy roads prevented us from sleeping well. Since we were on a budget, we chose to sacrifice comfort because the one-way plane fare ($200) for a 45-minute flight was about five times the price of the bus ticket ($40), excluding the additional hotel night.

Salar de Uyuni can be seen in just an hour, but since we came a long way, we did the three-day group tour which I highly recommend. For $180, we got a driver, an English speaking guide, meals, lodging, and four new friends in the same four-wheel drive SUV.

Our first stop was the **Train Cemetery**. It was a graveyard for trains abandoned by mostly mining companies after the collapse of their industry in the 1940s. It was interesting and though dangerous, people climbed up the rusted trains to play. Entering the salt flats, our first glimpse was of mined salt shoveled into mounds ready to be transported. They were as hard as rocks and we could climb and stand on them. A little further was the empty original salt hotel. It was the only hotel built on the salt flats, and was closed down due to problems in waste disposal. It was made of salt blocks, warm inside like a greenhouse, and pretty. Too bad it was not operational.

Finally, we were in the middle of nowhere. Just pure white, bright, and glaring salt flats with its geometrical patterns, from all angles to the horizon. It was amazing but deceiving. The salt looked soft but it was sharp. The salt flats is famous for



On the way to the Uyuni Salt Flats, we passed by a herd of llamas, and in this photo, this mother just gave birth a few seconds ago

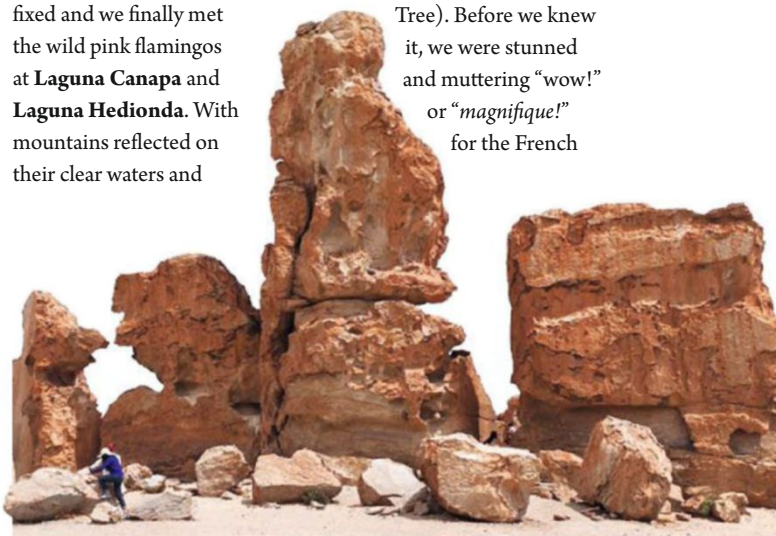
forced perspective shots. When the tour guide told us it was time to take pictures, we rushed to find our spots and executed our creative ideas, which we ran out of very fast. It took a lot of patience, endurance, and exclamations of "ouch!" from sitting and lying on the salt to get the pictures almost right, if not right. But it was so much fun. We had props such as toys, guitars, and bottles. In one stunt, I pretended to be chased by a dinosaur. I kept running back and forth, and at 3656 meters above sea level, I forgot about the thin air and oxygen. Luckily, I did not get altitude sickness.

Satisfied with our pictures, we moved on to **Isla Incahuasi** or Fish Island. Confusingly, the island was a huge mound of petrified coral rock formations with lots of giant cacti, and no fish. Instead, it was shaped like a fish. We hiked up the rocks, and from the extremely windy top, the 360-degree view of the vastness of the salt flats was amazingly surreal.

As the sun was setting, we arrived at our salt hotel accommodation for the night. Parts of it were made of salt blocks, and our rooms were comfortable and warm even without any heater. The hot shower cost BOB10 (or $1.50) per person, and towels were available for rent.

The next day, we drove to **Chiguana Desert** to see volcanoes and rock formations. It was then when our vehicle broke down, and when I witnessed how the Bolivians cared for each other. It was nice to see every passing vehicle stop by to offer help. We ended up eating our lunch by the roadside, but with the view of the **Ollagüe Volcano**. After an hour, the vehicle was fixed and we finally met the wild pink flamingos at **Laguna Canapa** and **Laguna Hedionda**. With mountains reflected on their clear waters and white borax mineral islands scattered around, they were gorgeous!

Quickly, we stopped by the **Siloli Desert** to take a picture of their most photographed rock, the Arbol de Piedra, a tree-shaped rock (which is why it is also known as Stone Tree). Before we knew it, we were stunned and muttering "wow!" or "*magnifique!*" for the French



Part of the last day of the salt flats tour—the big boulders of Valle de las Rocas (Valley of Rocks) where the more adventurous do rock climbing

OTHER PLACES TO EXPLORE

Lake Titicaca

Three hours away by tourist bus from La Paz lies Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world, bordered by both Bolivia and Peru. From its shore town Copacabana, we took a 30-minute boat ride to Isla del Sol (literally Island of the Sun), where we hiked to see some Inca ruins and enjoy the view of the snowcapped Andes mountains. There were no paved roads and people used donkeys to transport their goods. But the best part was our local Bolivian lunch. Everything was fresh—the trout was from the lake, and the beans, corn, and potatoes were from their farm.

La Paz

With varying altitudes of 3200 to 4100 meters above sea level, the highest city in the world, La Paz, really fascinated me. It was shaped like a bowl and mountains lined with houses surrounded the whole city. Locals wore their traditional blouses, skirts, hats, and accessories, and even their hairstyle was distinct—long hair, split in the middle, and braided. In the Witches' Market or El Mercado de las Brujas, witch doctors sold dried llama fetuses and dead frogs for rituals, medicinal plants, and potions. In contrast, the locals commuted in a modern public cable car system to and from the low and high altitude areas. Called the Mi Teleferico, and at only BOB3 (or $0.45) per way, the ride offered the most spectacular views of the city and the mountains, and nobody visiting Bolivia should ever miss it.

in our group. We had arrived at **Laguna Colorada** or Red Lagoon! The salt lake turned red every time the wind blew as caused by the movement of the microorganisms and algae in the water. And like the other lakes, it had patches of white borax deposits. It was breathtaking! The lake was literally red, white, and blue, with specks of pink flamingos.

Driving up to see the **Sol de Mañana** geothermal field, we had to be conscious of how we were feeling. At 4900 meters, one of us had to constantly chew on coca leaves to ease his altitude sickness. It was extremely cold at the sulfur smelling field of boiling mud pools, and all I wanted was to get back inside the vehicle. After that, we headed to our dorm style accommodation, where five of us slept in the same room. We snuggled up in our rented sleeping bags and lights went off at exactly 10 PM. I finally learned what the Bolivians meant when they said the toilet was economical. There was no shower, but you can bathe at the hot springs. There was no automatic flush, you had to brush your teeth with your own mineral water, and when my towel fell on the floor, I had to throw it away. It was all part of the rugged experience!

During our third day our first stop was the small rock speckled **Dali Desert**. It was named after artist Salvador Dali for the resemblance of its landscape to his surrealist paintings. From there, we could also see the **Seven Colors Mountain**. As if we had not seen enough colors, we continued to **Laguna Verde** or Green Lagoon. It was at the foot of Licancabur Volcano, and similar to Red Lagoon, the lake changed its color every time the wind blew, but to green. And that was it. We took our last group pictures, and headed back to the town of Uyuni.

But it was only 5 PM when our tour ended. Our Todo Turismo bus going back to La Paz was still at 9 PM. Grabbing the chance to see the salt flats one last time, we quickly walked around town to scout for a tour operator who could drive us back to the salt flats which was 35 minutes away. We found Atacama Mistica who charged us $50 for the trip, and whose available driver only spoke Spanish. Since we did not have time to waste, and he knew where to bring us, we took him. We made it to the salt flats in time to wait for the sunset, and that completed our wonderful Bolivian experience.

Checking out the eye-opening strange things such as dried llama fetuses and potions at the Witches' Market in La Paz

A monument made of salt for the Dakar Rally

Bolivia has preserved its culture well, as seen from what women normally wear everyday

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

It's not only about the largest salt flats in the world. It's about how unique and beautiful its wilderness is, where mountains and lakes show off their different untainted colors, and where flamingos and vicuñas roam freely and undisturbed in their natural habitats. It's about how rich the culture is, where amidst modernization, people still wear their traditional clothes in the city and follow age old rituals. And Bolivia is not only inexpensive, but one of the safest countries in South America.

The rewarding view atop Isla del Sol after a little hike up: the terraced plantations of the island, Lake Titicaca, and the snowcapped Andes Mountains

HALA BIRA!

Whether you like swiping paint on your face or merely enjoying highly choreographed performances, Iloilo City's **Dinagyang** might just become your new yearly festival tradition

written by PORTIA LADRIDO
photographed by HUGUES-ANTOINE SUIN

"I'M NOT GOING TO SAY SOMETHING VERY INTELLIGENT AND I APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE, BUT IT'S THE PEOPLE," said former French Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, Hugues-Antoine Suin, when asked about what it is about the Philippines that captured his heart. The former diplomat turned photographer has called our country his own for five years now, and even when most of us can't quite wrap our heads around the idea of a foreigner choosing to live in our country when the whole of social media tells us there are better things outside of it, this serves as a reminder that sometimes, we don't need to look too far to find beauty.

In his first exhibit, Hugues' vivid snaps of the **Dinagyang Festival** were mounted together with sculptor Hans Brumman's masterpieces at the Ayala Museum Artist Space last April. Didi Dee, art curator and dealer, decided to show them together because of the artists' common denominator, which is their love for Philippine culture—Hans' interest in local materials like the hardwood, and Suin's affinity to Filipinos as his subject matter. Printed in a new technology called Glicée, Hugues' photos resemble paintings of form and color—only when you come closer that you see details of figures. The intricacy and richness of the tribes' costumes, the energy of their beats and movements, and the overall fire of the Dinagyang Festival—all these are best captured in Hugues' images and we can call ourselves lucky to be able to get a stunning glimpse of what he sees behind his lens.

A BIT OF HISTORY

In 1967, a replica of the Santo Nino de Cebu was gifted to the San Jose Parish of Iloilo City. The devotees of the saint had arranged a grandiose celebration for its arrival, with natives covered in ashes dancing on the streets to resemble the *Atis* of Panay. At first, only the parishioners were involved, but because of the hype the festivities caused all over the province and the 1977 ordinance encouraging regions to boost tourism through festivals, it evolved into what that it is now.

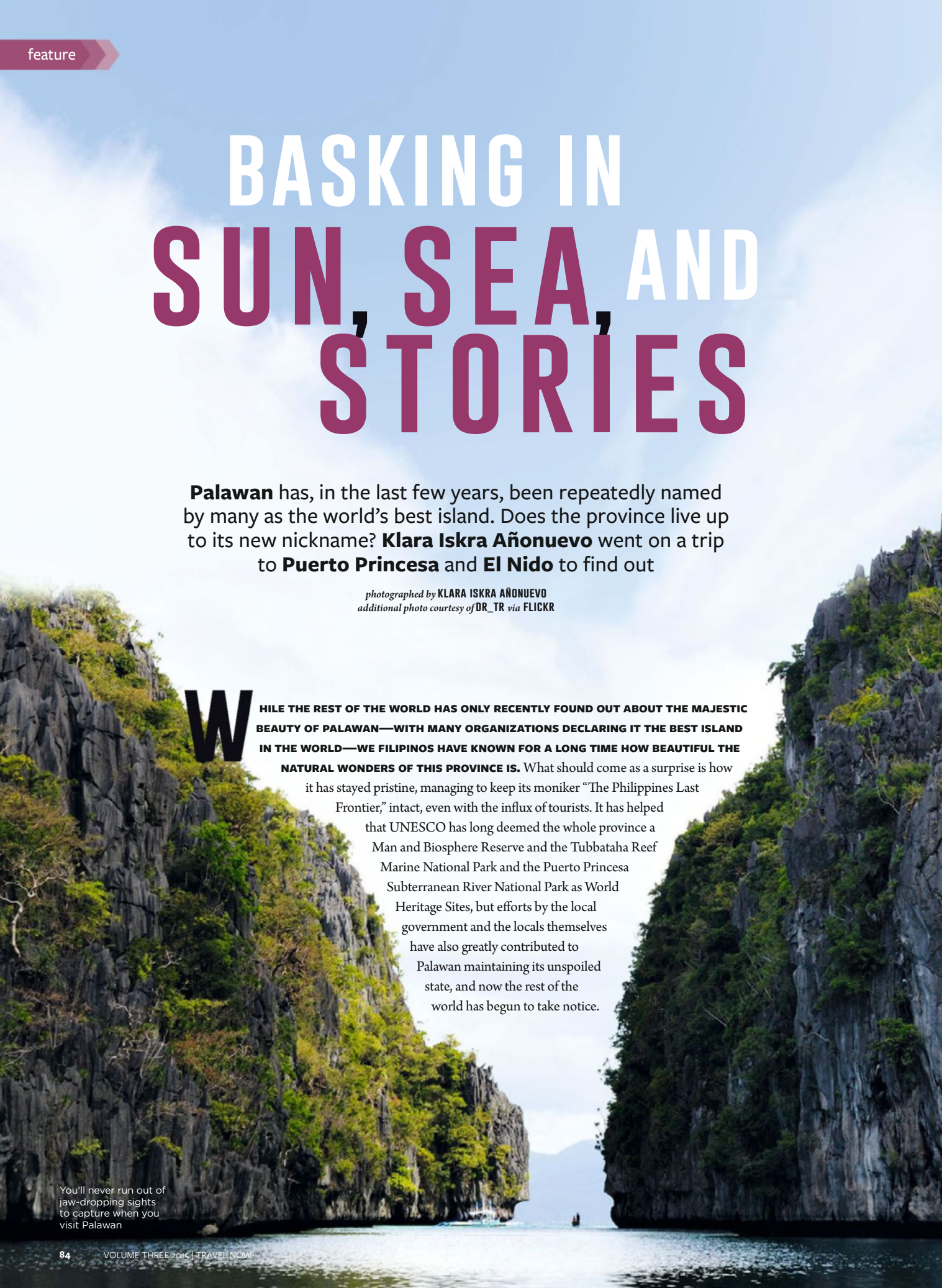
WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

While it is not as massive as Cebu's Sinulog or as religiously affiliated as Aklan's Ati-Atihan, Dinagyang has been known to be the most innovative. The use of PVC pipes pounded by paddles to produce distinct sounds was first introduced in Dinagyang. Even the practice of simultaneously performing for different stages known as the carousel performance is a tradition the Ilonggos also started. It's hard to miss out on Dinagyang for even just a year because you also risk missing being a part of the probable conception of a historic cultural ingenuity.

BASKING IN SUN, SEA, AND STORIES

Palawan has, in the last few years, been repeatedly named by many as the world's best island. Does the province live up to its new nickname? **Klara Iskra Añonuevo** went on a trip to **Puerto Princesa** and **El Nido** to find out

photographed by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
additional photo courtesy of DR_TR *via* FLICKR



WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS ONLY RECENTLY FOUND OUT ABOUT THE MAJESTIC BEAUTY OF PALAWAN—WITH MANY ORGANIZATIONS DECLARING IT THE BEST ISLAND IN THE WORLD—WE FILIPINOS HAVE KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME HOW BEAUTIFUL THE NATURAL WONDERS OF THIS PROVINCE IS. What should come as a surprise is how it has stayed pristine, managing to keep its moniker "The Philippines Last Frontier," intact, even with the influx of tourists. It has helped that UNESCO has long deemed the whole province a Man and Biosphere Reserve and the Tubbataha Reef Marine National Park and the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park as World Heritage Sites, but efforts by the local government and the locals themselves have also greatly contributed to Palawan maintaining its unspoiled state, and now the rest of the world has begun to take notice.

You'll never run out of jaw-dropping sights to capture when you visit Palawan

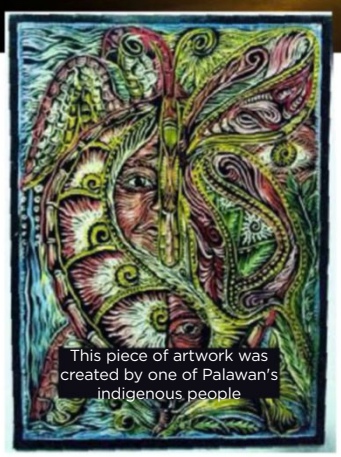
Sunrise views in Puerto Princesa are worth waking up early for

PUERTO PRINCESA

We began our exploration of Palawan where most visitors do—in **Puerto Princesa**. Palawan's capital is officially a city, but it is still home to beaches, caves, and of course, the famous Puerto Princesa Underground River. While it is tempting to just find the nearest beach and just spend the entire day there, Puerto Princesa is also a cultural and historical gold mine and one should not leave without visiting key sites.

THE PALAWAN HERITAGE CENTER

The Palawan Heritage Center should be your first stop in Puerto Princesa, as it will provide you with an extensive background on the capital and the rest of the province. The museum is operated by the local government and while small, it is full of interactive exhibits detailing the history and culture of Palawan. It also serves as a gallery for artwork created by the province's indigenous people. An introductory video to Puerto Princesa is also shown to visitors, which focuses on the province's great outdoors.



This piece of artwork was created by one of Palawan's indigenous people

If you're a fan of craft beer, you can't leave Puerto Princesa without trying the Ayahay Craft Beers of **Palaweño Brewery**. It comes in five brews: Ambog Ale, Palawan Wit, Palaw'an, Ayahay IPA, and Hunter. Visit <palawenobrewery.com> for more information.

Try some seafood *sisig* at KaLui Restaurant

A statue of Princess Eulalia in Plaza Eulalia. Puerto Princesa is said to be named after her

PLAZA CUARTEL AND PLAZA EULALIA

Plaza Cuartel and Plaza Eulalia are a very short walk away from each other but have very different histories. While today Plaza Cuartel is a leisure park visited by locals to get a good view of the adjacent wharf or to just spend an afternoon outdoors and relax, it has a very grim past. During World War II, the garrison was used by the Japanese to keep prisoners of war. When the Japanese realized that they were about to lose the war, they gathered all prisoners (around 150) in one dungeon, poured gasoline all over them, and set them on fire. Only eleven survived, and they went on to share the tragic story.

Plaza Eulalia, on the other hand, is a park named after Princess Eulalia of Spain, whom the city is actually named after. The daughter of Queen Isabella II, the princess died an untimely and mysterious death, so the queen renamed the city to Puerto dela Princesa, which eventually became Puerto Princesa. Legend has it that the ghost of Princess Eulalia can be seen walking along the bay on moonlit nights.

BINUATAN CREATIONS

Binuatan Creations, at first glance, seems like your typical souvenir shop. The place sells products made from traditional weaving, including placemats, coasters, table runners, a variety of bags, bookmarks, and curtains—basically anything that you can craft with the fabric woven from the province's indigenous fibers. But once you step inside the production room, you'll be immediately greeted by the weavers tirelessly working with their looms. They'll show you how to weave using the contraptions, and after a while, will invite you to try it for yourself.

Don't leave without buying souvenirs at Binuatan Creations!

EL NIDO

Limestone towers like these can be found all over the El Nido islands

It takes around a four-hour drive to get from Puerto Princesa to El Nido, but don't let that long trip deter you from visiting, as it has many spectacular islands and beaches, which is mostly why tourists visit this municipality. It's a lot less urban than Puerto Princesa, especially with the limestone cliffs towering in the background. If you only have one full day here (which we did), spend it island-hopping. The great thing about El Nido is that it has several islands prime for exploration that you won't have to do a repeat of any when you return.

THE BEACH SHACK

Located in Corong Corong Beach, the Beach Shack offers a breathtaking sunset view, which is a pretty awesome welcome for guests who have just been on a long drive to get here. You can see the limestone islands in the distance, and witness the setting sun cast an orange glow upon them. Take off your flip-flops as soon as you can—you would definitely want to feel the powdery sand in your feet. Once you've taken in everything and captured it all on your camera or phone, settle in the café's chairs lined along the beach, and order a drink (or even dinner!) to cap off the whole experience.

Try some water sports at The Beach Shack

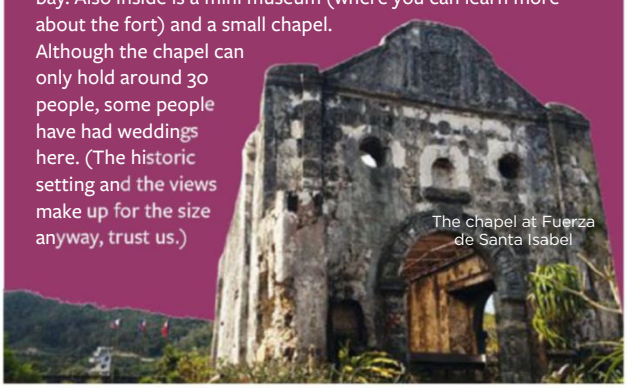
Go to the beach early for your island-hopping tour to avoid the rest of the tourist crowds

THE SMALL AND BIG LAGOONS

The next day, our first stops in our island-hopping adventure were The Small and Big Lagoon. Named so for obvious reasons, these two will not only charm you with their turquoise waters (just remember to bring water shoes if you plan on swimming or snorkeling, as some of the rocks and corals can be sharp! Some also try kayaking here.), but also with the the limestone cliffs that you can see up close. These lagoons are believed to

STOPOVER IN TAYTAY

If you have private transportation from Puerto Princesa to El Nido, consider a brief stopover in the first class municipality of Taytay. The Fuerza de Santa Isabel (named after Queen Isabela II of Spain) or the Taytay Fort is a must visit for history buffs. Construction was started in 1667 and was only finished in 1738 after much forced labor on Filipinos. After its completion, it was used to protect Taytay from Moro raiders who are said to have pillaged coastal villages of Palawan. Today, one only needs to pay P30 to be able to explore the inside of the fort. Inside, travelers are rewarded by lush greens and a view of the town and the bay. Also inside is a mini museum (where you can learn more about the fort) and a small chapel. Although the chapel can only hold around 30 people, some people have had weddings here. (The historic setting and the views make up for the size anyway, trust us.)



The chapel at Fuerza de Santa Isabel

be once caves, whose roofs eventually collapsed. Be there as early as you can though, as both lagoons, especially the small one, get packed with other tourists from late morning to the afternoon.

SNAKE ISLAND

Snake Island, (or Vigan Island) as your boatman slash guide will undoubtedly tell you, is not named because it is home to snakes. Rather, it is named for the S-shaped sandbar connecting the island to the mainland. The sandbar is more visible during low tide, and you can enjoy a walk along it or a swim around its shallow waters. Don't forget to climb up the view deck (don't go barefoot, as the trail is rocky and at certain places, steep) so you can appreciate the sandbar from a better view.

DIBULUAN BEACH AND PINAGBUYUTAN ISLAND

A whole day of island-hopping can leave one ravenous, and there's no better way to satisfy those hunger pangs than in Dibuluan Beach. This is a common lunch pit stop for tourists exploring the islands of El Nido, as the beach club here serves a hearty lunch. After having your fill, you can try stand-up paddle boarding, Hobie Cat sailing, and volleyball. If you're too tired for all of that, you may also take a short nap or just rest in one of the many cabanas, or enjoy a swing under a tree.

Pinagbuyutan Island, on the other hand, is famous for its abundance of coconut trees. Snorkeling is recommended in the island's waters, or, if you're always hungry like me, you could also have ice cream for dessert and enjoy it at the beach. Yes, I said ice cream. On this island we were welcomed by an ice cream vendor and his cooler full of frozen treats, and we were screaming for ice cream even before we got off the boat.

Have an afternoon snack at Pinagbuyutan Island

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

Palawan's natural wonders will make you want to stay outside for as much as you can. From the moment the sun rises, the province's many beaches, islands, limestone cliffs, caves, underground rivers, and other natural resources will make any visitor wide-eyed with wonder. Further underwater exploration will reward the adventurous traveler with a rich marine life, and for those who want a challenging trek, El Nido's Mount Taraw awaits. The sunset views on the island are spectacular and when seen with sand between toes and a drink in hand, could arguably be some of the best in the Philippines, if not the world.

Remember to pay your EDTF or Eco-Tourism Development fee. It costs P200 and gives the bearer access to tourist sites for 10 days. The profit funds the maintenance and protection of the environmental spots in El Nido.

1 The view from the top of the small hills of Snake Island will show you why it is called such
2 Try Hobie Cat sailing or just hang out in the swings of Dibuluan Beach

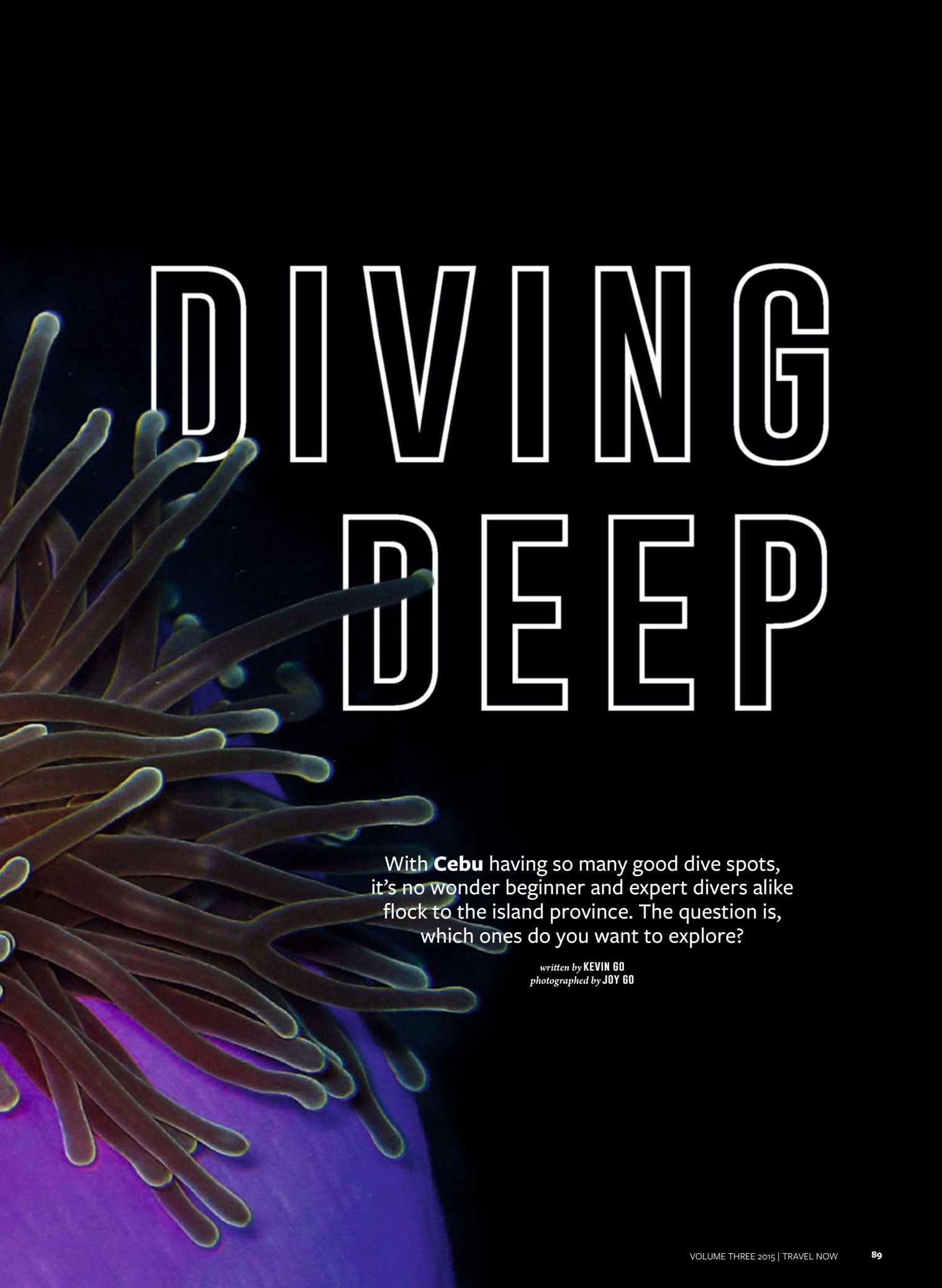
IPIL PRIVATE BEACH

The last on our island-hopping trip wasn't actually an island. Ipil Private Beach is technically part of the mainland, but is surrounded by cliffs, so the only way to reach it is via boat. It's the perfect way to end the day, as not only can you enjoy pre-dinner snacks and drinks here, but have them while watching the sun go down. Visitors can actually book accommodations here, which come with meals and butler service.

So, does Palawan deserve all the "World's Best Island" hype it has been getting? Definitely. All I can say is if you haven't visited this paradise, you better book a trip soon, before the rest of the world beats you to it.

Special thanks to AirAsia and the Palawan Tourism Council. AirAsia is the partner airline of the Palawan Tourism Council and the local government's "World's Best Island" campaign.

Nemo found—brightly colored clownfish in their brightly colored home



DIVING DEEP

With **Cebu** having so many good dive spots, it's no wonder beginner and expert divers alike flock to the island province. The question is, which ones do you want to explore?

written by KEVIN GO
photographed by JOY GO

Within an hour of leaving our doorstep, we can be gliding along the reefs of Mactan

THE PHILIPPINES IS HOME TO SEVERAL WORLD-RENOWNED DIVE SPOTS, AND IN CEBU, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERY KIND OF DIVER. A two- to three-hour drive will take you to world-renowned dive sites like Malapascua with its majestic thresher sharks, or Moalboal, now known for the millions-strong school of sardines that populate its already teeming reefs.

Yet one need not go that far to get some decent dives in Cebu. A visitor with limited time is still spoiled for choices. What we've always loved about being SCUBA divers and being in Cebu is that within an hour of leaving our doorstep, we can be underwater and gliding through the reefs of Mactan, Cebu's premier resort island.

1 Yellow sweetlips underneath a coral overhang. Mactan's deep walls are lined with many species of soft and hard coral
2 Step out, step into the blue and let your dreams take liquid flight

It's worth noting that the first tourist ever to set foot on Mactan did not fare quite as well. In 1521, the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, on an epic globe-girdling quest to find new spice routes, was killed in a clash with locals led by their chieftain Lapu-Lapu. Five hundred years down the line though, the people of Mactan have had a change of heart towards tourists. (And the visitors themselves are less likely to have ambitions of colonization these days anyway.)

The island now boasts dozens of beach resorts, hotels, spas, and restaurants, as well as the country's second-largest international airport, Mactan-Cebu International Airport. Indeed, Mactan has become the powerhouse of Cebu's flourishing tourism industry. It is also home to great diving.

When it comes to dive shops, the visitor faces a long, A-to-Z menu list, but as with anywhere else, it always pays to stick to the more reputable ones. Rates are generally affordable and for those who want to take up diving, one can be fully certified for around $250.

The island's dive sites are characterized by deep, vertical walls laden with soft and hard coral, swept by mild to strong currents. Don't let Mactan's proximity to Cebu's urban centers fool you. While the province's rapid growth has undoubtedly placed pressure on the marine environment, the establishment of marine sanctuaries in recent years actually means diving in Mactan has never been this good.

There are too many dive sites to mention, so what follows is a very incomplete list, compiled based on personal experience and personal preference.

On Mactan itself is **Tambuli**, located in front of a beach resort-turned-residential development of the same name. The shallow slope has a fish feeding station where divers

Coleman Shrimp hitching a ride on a fire urchin. These shrimps are no bigger than your thumbnail and are favorite subjects among macro photographers

are allowed to hand out scraps of bread to schools of little fish. Follow the slope to 25 meters and you'll see a seven-seater twin-engine aircraft, sunk deliberately as an artificial reef. It has become a magnet for fish life, as well as curious divers eager to see the fish.

A couple of kilometers south is **Marigondon Cave**, a deep underwater cavern populated by the bizarre flashlight fish. Peek into a crevice, shut off your dive light (you brought one, right?), and watch these bioluminescent creatures put on a light show. **Dakit-Dakit** and **Kon-Tiki**, have excellent fish life, and a large school of sardines has been residing in the area for years now. You'll know the sardines are around when they block out the sun.

The best dive sites, in our opinion, are located on **Olango Island**, reached by a 15- to 30-minute boat ride across a deep strait. **Talima Marine Sanctuary**, along Olango's northwest side, is a personal favorite. A small fishing boat deliberately sunk over a decade ago is now the epicenter of a veritable explosion of marine life. Although strong currents and occasional storm-driven waves have taken a toll on the wreck itself, divers can still count on seeing swirling schools of silvery jacks, sweetlips, barracuda, and other small and not-so-small reef fish.

Just south of Olango are the islets of **Hilutungan** and **Nalusuan**, both well-established marine sanctuaries. Reefs once laid bare by indiscriminate dynamite fishing now teem with marine life. Giant trevallies, huge schools of jacks and sweetlips, as well as blue-spotted stingrays, are spotted regularly. Both islets are also popular snorkeling and island-hopping destinations, as dozens of excursion boats tied up at any given time will attest.

In recent years, Mactan has been garnering increased interest from underwater macro photographers. Small but photogenic subjects like frogfish, ghost

1. TAMBULI
2. KON-TIKI
3. DAKIT-DAKIT
4. MARIGONDON CAVE
5. OLANGO ISLAND
6. HILUTUNGAN
7. NALUSUAN
8. PANDANON ISLAND

AS MORE CRITTERS ARE SIGHTED AND AS MORE DIVE GUIDES ARE TRAINED TO SPOT THEM, MACTAN'S REPUTATION AS A MACRO HAVEN WILL CONTINUE TO GROW.

This friendly turtle posed patiently for a close-up portrait before swimming away. All marine turtles are on the endangered species list and encounters like this are to be cherished

This twin-engined plane sits in about 25 meters of water and has become an attraction for divers and fish alike

pipefish, nudibranchs, harlequin shrimp, and the flake-sized pygmy seahorses are being captured en masse, but in a good way—with pixels.

The recent discovery of red and green hairy shrimps attracted the attention of hardcore photography enthusiasts who plane in from different corners of the world in the hopes of getting images of these rare and elusive animals. As more critters are sighted and as more dive guides are trained to spot them, Mactan's reputation as a macro haven will continue to grow.

WHY IT'S WORTH STAYING OUTDOORS FOR

The Philippines is the epicenter of marine biodiversity. We have the highest concentration of marine life anywhere in the world and the numbers are truly impressive: over 2800 fish species and 488 of the 500 known coral species are found in our waters. Our seas are a playground, a veritable wonderland of amazing colors and wonderful creatures. With proper training, the right equipment and armed with reservoirs of enthusiasm, anyone can become a certified SCUBA diver. Introductory dives are available for those who don't have time for the full course, or aren't quite sure if SCUBA diving is truly for them. Either way, you'll find yourself totally immersed in a different world, gliding in liquid space seemingly unfettered by gravity and other terrestrial concerns. Dive right in and prepare to be amazed!

For surface intervals or just plain relaxation—or for when you want to take time out with the non-divers in your group, a picnic on the boat is easily arranged, but sailing off to **Pandanon Island**, 16 kilometers southeast of Mactan is becoming a favorite among divers and other visitors.

Another destination growing in popularity for those who want to get away from it all—or who just want to feel like they are—is the **North Sandbar**. This isolated spit of pristine white sand lying off the northern coast of Bohol makes you feel like you've stepped into a postcard. Divers traveling with friends or family not as hyperbarically inclined may even find it worthwhile putting the dive gear aside and making time to visit the place.

It's the height of summer. The sun and sea beckon. Time to step out, step into the blue and let your dreams take liquid flight!

For more information on diving in Cebu, contact Eric Casas of Aquadive Inc., located at Hadsan Beach Resort, Marigondon, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. Call them at (+63 32) 518 1155, (+63 32) 512 1177, or visit <aquadive.com.ph>.

Nudibranchs are tiny, soft-bodied critters belonging to the mollusk family. They come in a wide variety of striking color patterns

WORLDLY WHEREABOUTS

Take a peek inside letterer **Abbey Sy**'s travel journals as she chronicles her adventures through pen and paper

photographed and illustrated by ABBEY SY

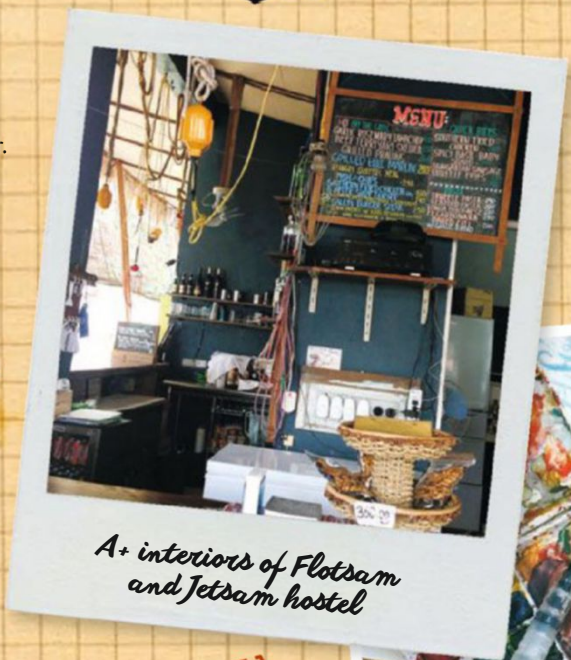
I've always considered traveling to be an avenue for discovery—exploring the unfamiliar territories of this world, and at the same time finding myself in the process.

There's just something about traveling. Of course, there is fear. But there is also that hunger to see parts of yourself and parts of the world that have yet to be discovered. There is also that irreplaceable freedom you get from leaving the comforts of your own home, as you head out to settle into the unknown and trust that things will be alright. There's that unfamiliarity I love. Getting to see things with your own eyes for the very first time—that makes me fall in love with traveling.

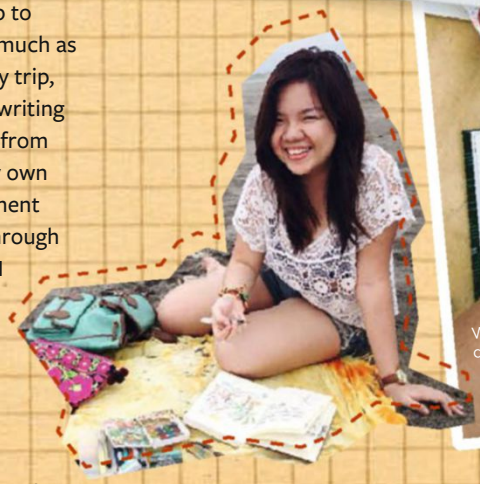
The idea of keeping travel journals started on my trip to Europe two years ago. As much as I loved taking photos of my trip, I found myself constantly writing and illustrating more, and from there, telling stories of my own adventures. I found fulfillment in preserving memories through my journals, which is why I decided to continue the habit of travel journaling ever since.

La Union

In an attempt to get away for just a weekend, I went to La Union with a few friends last November to unwind from the city life. And unwind I did—from sampling the best local fare and painting my heart out by the sea to taking in the awe-inspiring view of the beach.



A+ interiors of Flotsam and Jetsam hostel



Writing by the sea during downtime

Europe

Visiting Europe opened so many possibilities for me. Getting a chance to travel to my dream destination in itself was a highlight. I felt like I was transported to another world as I got to see the beautiful cities of **Paris**, **Amsterdam**, **Brussels**, and **London** with my own eyes. I consider spending Christmas in the United Kingdom and New Year in Paris as two of my best travel experiences.

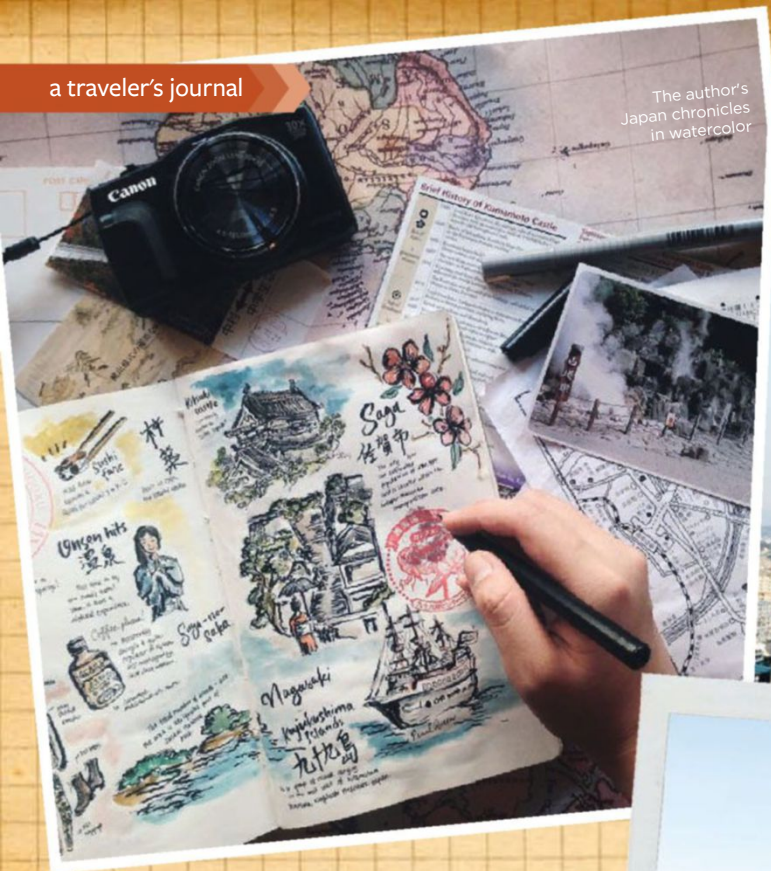
London through the author's eyes

British staples

Seeing the Eiffel Tower in person was a dream come true

Chronicling bits and pieces of Amsterdam

The Big Ben

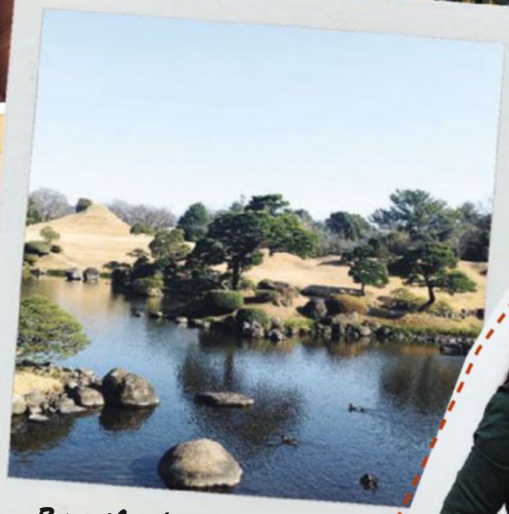


The author's Japan chronicles in watercolor

View of the region from above

Kyushu

Kyushu, located at the southern part of Japan, was a huge eye-opener. In contrast to the busy streets of Tokyo and Osaka, Kyushu was full of tradition and culture. Adorned with small towns, quaint shops, and beautiful tourist attractions, Kyushu was the perfect escape over the holidays as the weather was perfectly cool and breezy.



Breathtaking view of the Suizen-ji Garden

A lovely shop display at one of the stores in Jiufen

Japan diaries

Backpacking essentials

Most afternoons were spent writing at quaint cafés around the region

Riding elephants during a visit to Chiang Mai

Southeast Asia

My friend Tricie and I backpacked across Southeast Asia for a month after graduating college. We traveled to five countries: **Ho Chi Minh** in **Vietnam**, **Phnom Penh** and **Siem Reap** in **Cambodia**, **Chiang Mai** in **Thailand**, **Singapore**, and **Penang** and **Kuala Lumpur** in **Malaysia**. Getting the chance to witness the beauty of this Asian region was amazing. From the temples and historical heritage sites to the bustling nightlife the cities depicted, our adventure proved to be more than what we were expecting.

Among the highlights of the trip were riding elephants in Chiang Mai, visiting the Angkor Wat complex in Siem Reap, art store and bookstore hopping in Singapore, street art sighting in Penang, and spending most of our downtime at quaint cafés, mostly writing, reading and drawing.

After our trip, we documented our travels and compiled a book called Life in Transit (<bit.ly/lifeintransit2014>). We also filtered our Instagram photos via the hashtag #lifeintransit2014 to keep track of our adventures.

Lanterns at Chinatown, Singapore

The Life in Transit book is a chronicle of Abbey and Tricie's trip and a personal diary they created to document their adventures

WORLD TRAVELER
Cheryl Tiu

When she isn't busy working as publisher and deputy editor for LIFESTYLE ASIA magazine, contributing articles to Forbes.com or CNN Travel, or writing her column for the Philippine Star (her column, "In Between Deadlines," is about food and travel—two of her passions), **Cheryl Tiu** makes sure she has time to actually travel. Here she shares her favorite places and tips on how to enjoy the experience best

written by MARBEE SHING-GO
photos courtesy of CHERYL TIU
portrait by TODD DARLING

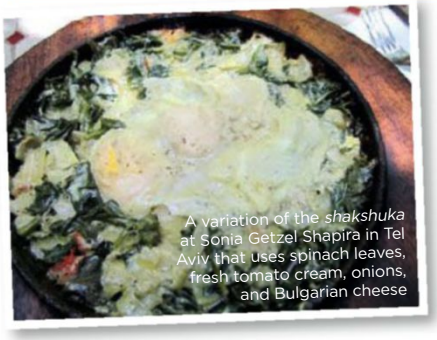
"**TRAVEL FOR ME IS THE BEST EDUCATION IN THIS SCHOOL CALLED LIFE,"** **Cheryl Tiu** says, "Being in a distant place—away from routine, the regular and the familiar—also brings out a sense of adventure, independence, and self-discovery. It also allows you to bask in God's absolute perfection through the wonders of the world."

Cheryl's most cherished experiences read like a traveler's bucket list—from enjoying sunset cocktails in the middle of Tanzania's Serengeti in the company of zebras and wildebeest to facing her fear of flying by taking on the co-pilot seat in a six-seater plane in Botswana to having her best meal in London at a no-frills Afghan restaurant in a city populated with fancy, Michelin-starred eateries. The stories of these experiences are ones she shares with TRAVEL NOW, speaking with a trace of nostalgia and a big smile on her face.

Some of Cheryl's travels are a mix of personal and work trips

JERUSALEM & TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

Israel is an amazing multicultural country, steeped in so much history. I went from the past (historical Jerusalem brought to life everything I learned from the Bible) to the present (I celebrated my youth in the modern, vibrant, and 24/7 party city of Tel Aviv). Jerusalem and Tel Aviv are so different from each other, it's hard to believe they are only an hour's drive apart!

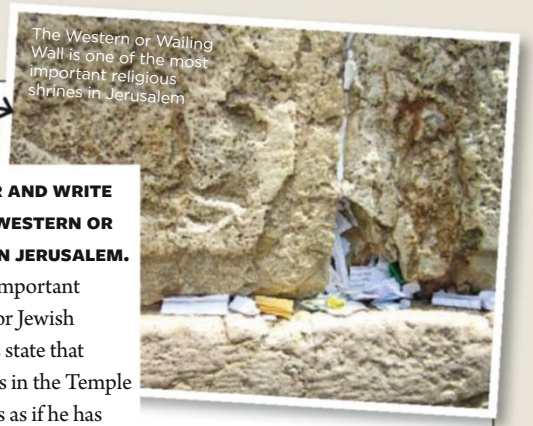


A variation of the *shakshuka* at Sonia Getzel Shapira in Tel Aviv that uses spinach leaves, fresh tomato cream, onions, and Bulgarian cheese

1 HAVE SHAKSHUKA FOR BREAKFAST OR BRUNCH. Gorgeous, perfectly poached eggs swimming in tomato sauce are a delicious (and healthy) Israeli staple. Likewise, if you are staying at a hotel, don't miss out on breakfast. Fresh salads, varied selections of goat's and sheep's cheese are abundant. Just keep in mind that it's rare to find meat during breakfast because kosher kitchens have to keep the meat and dairy separate.

2 SWIM—OR FLOAT IN THE DEAD SEA. It's a very cool feeling that with zero effort, you are above the water! It's great for curing psoriasis, too. But whatever you do, be very careful of your eyes and don't dunk your head into the water—the salt content is extremely high!

3 VISIT THE YAD VASHEM (HOLOCAUST MUSEUM) IN JERUSALEM. While this is heart-breaking, a visit here is imperative, to know, feel, and better understand one of the most important incidents in history.



The Western or Wailing Wall is one of the most important religious shrines in Jerusalem

4 SAY A PRAYER AND WRITE A NOTE AT THE WESTERN OR WAILING WALL IN JERUSALEM. This is the most important religious shrine for Jewish people. The sages state that anyone who prays in the Temple of Jerusalem, "it is as if he has prayed before the throne of glory because the gate of heaven is situated there and it is open to hear prayer." Be sure to come covered up or bring a shawl.

5 SPEND SABBATH IN TEL AVIV. Jerusalem, which is a lot more conservative, will be dead and quiet. The beaches of Tel Aviv, on the other hand, will be teeming with some of the most beautiful bodies chasing the sun.

On Sabbath in Tel Aviv, there are fun things like a headphones party—where only those wearing headphones can hear the music

LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA

With my friend Christine Dayrit at the breathtaking Victoria Falls where there are double rainbows daily

My time here was short—an overnight trip in between Botswana and South Africa, but it was here I really saw God in the form of the majestic falls and the permanent double rainbows at Victoria Falls.

1 VISIT VICTORIA FALLS. One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and the largest waterfalls in the world, this is the primary reason when visiting Zambia. Remember to take all your photos before you walk through the falls because you will be drenched in water—yes, even with a raincoat—and no longer look as photogenic! (Bring waterproof bags for your cameras and phones.)

2 DO ALL YOUR SOUVENIR-SHOPPING AFTER VICTORIA FALLS. The souvenir shops around the falls have really beautiful and unique African- and animal-inspired decors unseen elsewhere in the world. Just haggle and make sure they pack them well for aircrafts.

3 GO ON A CRUISE ON THE ZAMBEZI RIVER. You get to sit relaxed on a boat, glass of South African chardonnay on hand, looking out for elephants, giraffes, crocodiles, hippos and all sorts of birds, before watching the sun go down.

4 BE ADVENTUROUS AND EAT LOCAL—ZAMBIAN—FOOD! At our stay at the stunning River Club, we requested for local food and the staff made us a traditional Lozi (a local tribe) dish with *Nshima* (kind of like polenta) and sliced prime fillet. I thought it to be similar to our beef *mechado* in the Philippines!

5 CONQUER YOUR FEAR OF FLYING. I flew the smallest plane I had ever been on—a tiny six-seater (including the pilots' seats!) from Zambia to Botswana. I was holding my breath the entire time but it made me brave. So on my last African bush plane ride, I mustered my strength to conquer my fear of flying and took the co-pilot seat. It's a great experience and you get the best view!

SINGAPORE

I love coming to Singapore to eat and drink—it has one of the best dining and cocktail bar scenes in Asia. Plus, everyone speaks English and it's very cosmopolitan, efficient and safe.

1 FOR FINE DINING, HEAD TO RESTAURANT ANDRE AND JAAN. At his namesake restaurant, Andre Chiang translates his Octaphilosophy with the freshest produce to art on a plate. Jaan is helmed by 32-year-old Julien Royer who serves perfect French cuisine against a stunning view of the Lion City from the 70th floor of the Swissôtel. If dinner is too pricey at either, opt for the lunch menu.

2 SHOP AT KEEPERS. I'm one of those who patronizes the local products in the country I am at. Keepers at Orchard Road has a well-curated display of wares by talented Singaporean artists, a good mix of up-and-coming to established who make beautiful, artisan jewelry and clothes. I particularly like Carrie K. and Sabrina Goh.

3 HAVE A COCKTAIL—OR LOTS OF COCKTAILS. The cocktail scene in Singapore is, in my humble opinion, the best in Asia. Tippling Club, Antidote at Fairmont Hotel, 28 Hong Kong, Jekyll and Hyde, The Library, and Cufflink Club are some of those who do them exceptionally well.

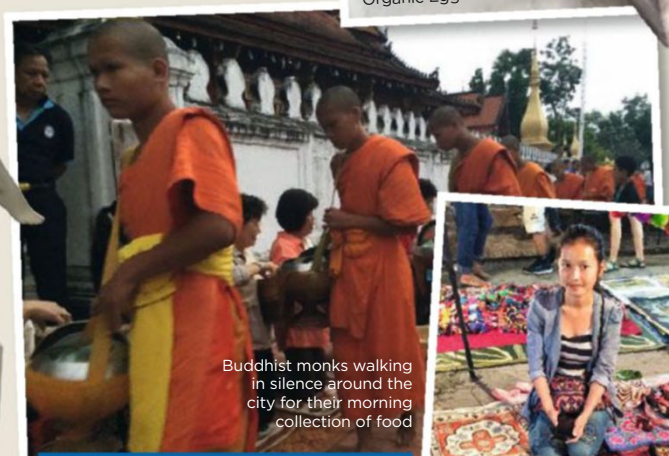
4 CHECK OUT BURNT ENDS FOR SMALL DISHES SMOKED, SLOW-ROASTED, BAKED AND GRILLED FROM THEIR CUSTOM-MADE OVEN. Burnt Ends has a three-month waitlist for reservations, so the tip is to come right when it opens 11:45 AM (for lunch) or 6 PM (for dinner). The sanger—pulled pork sandwich—is a must try.

5 MAKE YOUR NECESSARY LOCAL CALLS FROM CHANGI AIRPORT. All calls to any local Singaporean number (yes, even cell phones!) are free from any telephone at Changi airport, so get in touch right when you land, or right before you leave.

At a Four Hands dinner at Restaurant Andre with Chef Joan Roca of El Cellar de Can Roca and Andre Chiang of Restaurant Andre

Julien Royer's $5 Rosemary Smoked Organic Egg at Jaan

Keepers is a treasure trove for up and coming and established Singaporean designers, artists, and chefs



Buddhist monks walking in silence around the city for their morning collection of food

LUANG PRABANG, LAOS

Time seems to slow down at the UNESCO heritage city of Luang Prabang. Here, beauty is found in simplicity, and where one of Buddha's most famous teachings on mindfulness is best experienced.

1 VISIT PAK OU CAVES. This is one of my favorite shrines as there are over 3000 different-sized Buddha statues, framed by the limestone cliffs overlooking the Mekong River the cave is perched on.

2 HIKE UP PHOUSI HILL. A hike 328 steps up the 100-meter hill offers a high-energy cardio workout, after which you are rewarded first, with a 360-degree panoramic view of the city, and secondly, after making your way down, with a vibrant night market.

3 SHOP AT THE NIGHT MARKET. This opens from 5 PM to 11 PM daily. There are so many gorgeous finds, from hand-woven pillow cases, bags, slippers, tops, pants to Laotian coffee and tea—they are great steals (just bargain!) to bring back home for yourself or as *pasalubong*.

4 WAKE UP AT TO PARTICIPATE IN *TAK BAT* OR ALMS-GIVING TO THE MONKS. Every day at 5:30 AM, Buddhist monks walk in silence around the city for their morning collection of food, while local laypeople and tourists wait in the dark, kneeling on the sidewalk, basket of sticky rice, crackers, and money in hand.

Pretty hand-sewn pillowcases at the night market

5 OBSERVE BUDDHA'S HANDS AT POPULAR TEMPLES WAT XIENG THONG AND WAT WISUNARAT. Both arms down at sides, palms against thighs reveal that he is calling for the rain, while two hands with palms facing outward means that he is telling the Lao people to stop fighting over water for their farms.

Sunday morning walks around Sheung Wan will find you pretty pockets of calm

Gorgeous Wagyu Carpaccio at Carbone

HONG KONG

Hong Kong is my favorite weekend getaway, given that it's only an hour and a half from Manila! I love that there are so many things to do here, from eating and drinking to shopping to hiking—and cabs are relatively inexpensive and you can easily get around almost anywhere with the MTR.

1 **HIKE!** Hong Kong is actually fabulous for exercise. The entire landscape is hilly so even just getting to your favorite bar on Mid-Levels or Soho is a hike already. Check out the Twins (the first mountain is 363 meters while the second is 386 meters) on a weekend morning—which will eventually lead you down to Stanley Market.

2 **GO FOR DIMSUM AND CLASSIC CANTONESE CUISINE.** My favorite reliable classics will always be Din Tai Fung, Tim Ho Wan, Fu Sing, Lei Garden (in IFC) and Delicious Kitchen in Causeway Bay (best pork chops ever).

3 **CHECK OUT MODERN FOOD CONCEPTS.** The restaurant scene in Hong Kong will forever be vibrant, and some of my recent favorites are Little Bao (American diner with an Asian twist), Ho Lee Fook (modern Chinese), Carbone (American-Italian), Butcher's Club (great burgers), Brickhouse (Mexican,) and Mott 32 (modern Chinese).

4 **ENJOY THE NIGHTLIFE WITH SOME COOL COCKTAILS.** Check out Stockton, Ham & Sherry, Lily & Bloom, Salon 10, Varga Lounge, Artesian Bar, and Stone Nullah Tavern.

5 **STROLL AROUND SHEUNG WAN ON A SUNDAY MORNING.** It's Hong Kong at its calmest and makes for great photos.

Cycling around London

LONDON, ENGLAND

Who doesn't love this cosmopolitan city with so much culture yet is both hipster-underground and elegant at the same time? I present to you a few alternatives and tips apart from the popular tourist sites.

1 **TAKE THE TUBE.** You don't have to worry about traffic, most of the places you need to get to are within a reasonable walking distance from the stops. I recommend getting the 7-Day Travel Card or the Oyster card (If you return the card at the end of your trip, you get GBP5 back!) Whatever you do, DO NOT buy the single journey ticket as it will set you back GBP4.70 (around P350!)–as opposed to just GBP1.80 (around P135) when you use your Oyster card.

2 **SEE LONDON IN ANOTHER WAY BY GETTING SOME EXERCISE—CYCLING!** It's so fun to cycle through East London's canals to Victoria Park to Olympic Park. I borrowed a bike from my friend but there are lots of places to rent from.

3 **GO TO ARTESIAN AND WHITE LYON FOR SOME COCKTAILS.** Artesian was named World's Best Bar (by Tales of the Cocktail) for two years straight—and with good reason: apart from a glass of water, you are served a glass of prosecco "to cleanse your palate;" the menu unfolds into a watercolor painting that you can take home; and the cocktails are out-of-this-world in both presentation and taste. White Lyon offers an alternative cocktail experience—and a very bold one—they're the first in the world to not use ice nor any fresh ingredients. Everything is pre-bottled during off hours, allowing more customer interaction, consistency, and only .05% to 1% wastage! They won Best New International Bar in 2014 at Tales of the Cocktail.

Afghan national dish *Kabuli Palaw* (lamb pilaf) at Ariana Restaurant at the Mile End neighborhood

4 **EAT AFGHAN CUISINE.** Chances are you are most likely not going to visit Afghanistan in your lifetime, but luckily, London, being such an international city, has a few Afghan restaurants. The food is incredible, especially their national dish *Kabuli Palaw* (lamb pilaf), which I had at Ariana in the Mile End neighborhood.

5 **HAVE A GLASS OF WINE—OR TWO—AT THE OLDEST BAR IN LONDON, WHICH IS PRETTY MUCH AN UNDERGROUND CAVE!** Gordon's Wine Bar was founded in 1890 (Rudyard Kipling used to live in the building and wrote "The Light That Failed" here). Wines are served by the bottle and by the glass, including non-commercial varieties from Lebanon, Romania, and Croatia.

Farm, Farm AWAY

2015 is all about freshness and well-being. There is a great satisfaction in knowing where your food comes from. For your next culinary adventure, **Meriam Otarra** lists three farm-to-table and organic restaurants in **UP Town Center** where you can get your fresh meat and leafy greens

photographed by JOHN OCAMPO OF STUDIO 100, DAN DOYDORA, *and* MARYEL DURAN

BACKYARD KITCHEN + BREW

Hip and cozy at the same time, the leather couches, fake grass-and-wood combo, and the tin foil buckets hanging from the ceiling will make you feel right at home—in your very own backyard. While the multifaceted Philippine-flag-hued car number plates give this resto-bar a local feel, **Backyard Kitchen + Brew**'s selection of meat is surely international.

Since their opening last December 2014, the restaurant has gained popularity with a broad clientele—from Sunday mass goers to sports enthusiasts who enjoy live matches played on Backyard's TV sets. But all come to indulge on their delicious farm-to-table meals. Their Backyard Burger for example—the 100% brisket and cheek patty is cooked for four to five hours—is a collection of all good burgers rolled into one. Chef Edward Bugia, the gastronomic wizard behind Backyard's mouthwatering menu, says that he has always wanted to make this burger. As for their other specialties, their Nose to Tail Fetuccini is made from scratch—from the sauce to the noodles. Bringing a local twist to their lineup of garlic flat breads is their Salted Egg Chicken Skin, a nostalgic response to *chicharon*. Speaking of guilty pleasures, you cannot leave this place without trying their desserts. Their baked-to-order Pizzookie's wonderful aroma can be smelled as the skillet leaves the kitchen and placed unto your table. The mantecado ice cream melts swiftly—so you cut into its rich crust to keep up. The crisp toasted cookie is no doubt the best part.

Salted Egg Chicken Skin Flat Bread

Slow Roasted Pork Belly

Backyard Burger

Dig in to your freshly baked Pizzookie before the mantecado ice cream melts!

Nose to Tail Fetuccini

Backyard's homemade draft beer and Butterbeer flavored beer

For more information, like them on Backyard Kitchen and Brew Manila or follow them on Backyard_MNL and Backyard_MNL

UP Town Center is located at Katipunan Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Benguet Suman

Honey Beef Belly Roast

Try their pasta version of *paella*

Bacon *Lechon Kawali*

Warm Arugula and Spinach Salad

THE CLEAN PLATE

Their menu is filled with endless organic meal varieties, including their Small Plates (appetizers) and their Sweet Plates (desserts). Majority of their meat produce comes all the way from Bukidnon and the kitchen only uses the most select ingredients from sea salt to organic pepper. **The Clean Plate** is a fusion of organic and comfort food, based on ingredients and recipes by Chef CJ Lim and the team behind Twist Resto. It crushes the stereotype of bland all-vegetable meals— perfect for the discriminating Filipino diet. The restaurant is adorned with a collection of plates below the bar, local products on display on one side of the wall, and ceilings prettified with hip bulbs inside mason jars. The result is nothing short of lovely.

Best served hot, a plate of arugula and spinach salad is the best way to start your meal. The salad's triple-cheese highlight—breaded Bacolod *kesong puti*, Asiago, and Negros blue cheese—is so flavorful. Their Honey Beef Belly Roast is a work of art, something that you will be sure of from the very first bite. The coco-and-honey-reduced meat reminds you of the local *humba* of the south, paired with the pink rice of the north. If pasta is your thing, they also cook organic wheat spaghetti *paella* style, topped with river prawns, New Zealand mussels, and Pomodoro sauce spiced up with saffron. The Clean Plate's rather out-of-the-box fusion also gave birth to Bacon *Lechon Kawali*. Trust me, it tastes as good as it sounds. Kimchi nutella dough? The Clean Plate says why not? The restaurant doesn't serve alcohol nor soda, but try The Clean Juices—they are good.

For more information, email them at twistrestoph@gmail.com or follow them on twistrestoph

Greeks drink *ouzo* any time of the day despite it being alcoholic

Moussaka

Topped with Feta cheese, roasted vegetables, and mint yoghurt, Kos' Grilled Lamp Chops is a must-try!

Kos *Salata*

Grilled Salmon Fillet with *Ladolemono*

KOS GREEK OUZERI

Now the northerners have their very own Grecian bliss in UP Town Center. Giving you only the most authentic taste of the Mediterranean on a plate, **Kos Greek Ouzeri** imports olive oils and cheeses from Greece itself. While their interior does not have the whites and blues of a stereotypical Greek design, their food is the closest to Greece that you will ever get without actually going to Greece. The anatomy of a Greek dish is simple—subtle pairings but definitely rich flavors, as Chef Mats Loo explains. Also the founder of First Gourmet Academy in Quezon City, Chef Mats lets his students practice in their kitchen in preparation for their future careers here and abroad.

Before digging in to Kos' wide options of main dishes, tease your tongue with *Mezedes*, a selection of small dishes served to accompany the famed aperitif, *ouzo*. On top of the list of *Mezedes* are *tzatziki* (yoghurt cucumber dip flavored with garlic and dill) and hummus. Similar to lasagna is the traditional *Moussaka*, layered with eggplant, potatoes, ground beef, and béchamel. Fish lovers will love the Grilled Salmon Fillet with *Ladolemono* or lemon oil. Kos' partner farm in Tagaytay produces the greens for the salads and the menu's accompanying vegetables, creating unbeatable fresh flavors. You will never go wrong with Kos *Salata*, mixed green lettuce with sweet additions like sun-dried tomatoes, dried figs, caramelized nuts, and grapes tossed with honey grape vinaigrette.

With a not-so-expensive menu that pays homage to Greek traditions, Kos Greek Ouzeri is definitely a restaurant you will visit more than once.

For more information, email them at kosgreek@yahoo.com or like them on Kos Greek Ouzeri

A TASTE OF THAILAND

Bangkok's **Mango Tree** has slowly but steadily built its empire of restaurants all over the world. Headed by CEO Pitaya Phanphensophon, the company plans to expand even more by sticking to what it does best—serving its diners fresh and delicious Thai food while at the same time providing them with a memorable dining experience that keeps them coming back

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of MANGO TREE
additional photos by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO

FROM THE ROOTS

Mango Tree's birth can only be described as simple: opening in 1994, the humble Thai restaurant was named so because there was a mango tree planted near the façade of the building—a house located in Bangkok and built over a hundred years ago during the reign of King Rama VI. From the get go, Mango Tree specialized in casual fine dining, and during the time of its beginnings, there weren't a lot of restaurants doing the same thing.

While the location in Surawong is just a short distance away from the busy streets of Bangkok, it's still tucked within small side streets, providing guests a respite from the chaos of the city. This privacy also gives guests the chance to indulge in Thai cuisine served with the hospitality Thais are known for, with Thai music playing in the background.

The restaurant was envisioned to be a place where one can simply hang out with friends while enjoying fresh Thai food and a couple of Asian-inspired cocktails. And while the food and ambience spells luxury, guests are always invited to feel at home. In fact, a key factor in Mango Tree's exceptional service is the fact that they teach their employees to see guests not as paying customers, but as friends they invited over for dinner and drinks. The main goal of every branch is to ensure that all guests leave with a remarkable dining experience.

With Mango Tree Worldwide CEO Pitaya Phanphensophan at the helm, the restaurant started making a name for itself, and soon enough, started

The Tom Yum Scampi

Enjoy a gorgeous view of the Chao Phraya river while enjoying cocktails at Mango Tree

Mango Tree on the River serves many delicious dishes, including the Yum Woonsen with Alaskan Crab

to build its brand as a premier restaurant that serves quality Thai food. "If you go to Thai restaurants around the world, there are mostly mom and pop operations, but nobody had branded it, and we saw a big opportunity there," shares Managing Director Trevor MacKenzie.

TO THE FRUITS

Pitaya set out with a vision to be the premier global brand of Thai cuisine, and it seems like Mango Tree is well on its way to achieving that. Today, Mango tree has 46 restaurants in at least nine countries around the world, including the Philippines, England, Japan, the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia. With Thai cuisine climbing to number five of the most consumed food in the world (bested only by Italian, Chinese, French, and Japanese food), it's only looking better for the homegrown brand. Even the health conscious can get in on the Thai food trend, as the cuisine is known to be low in fat and sugar while still maintaining that distinct Thai flavor.

While these branches outside of Thailand still mostly serve Thai food, most of the ingredients are sourced locally, keeping with the notion that Thai cuisine is essentially food as its freshest. Mango Tree branches actually coordinate with nearby stores to bring them the freshest ingredients, and of course, as much as possible, these must be organic and chemical-free. In fact, in the Washington D.C. branch, there are no freezers for meat and other ingredients (only for ice cream). This is to ensure that the food is prepared fresh and without shortcuts. This no-freezer policy is something that the company seeks to impose on all their branches eventually.

Contrary to popular belief, the chefs in these foreign branches need not be Thai—in fact, Trevor insists that these restaurants aren't chef-oriented, a concept he learned from Pitaya's mom. "You can't be reliant on your chef, because if he leaves, the restaurant changes." To ensure the high quality of the food and service are upheld, not only do they send the staff to Bangkok to train, but they also do regular visits on their branches all over the world. This is also why it takes a long period of consideration before Mango Tree opens a new branch. Apart from a "wow" location and foot traffic, Pitaya and Trevor also consider the place's openness to Thai food. "They have to be ready for Thai food the way that we want to do it," Trevor says. "We go into a place a few times to make sure that place can sustain an outlet because we don't want to open one only to close it later. We haven't had any failures yet and we want to keep it that way."

The Mango Tree flagship in the Philippines (located at the Fort) will soon undergo a renovation

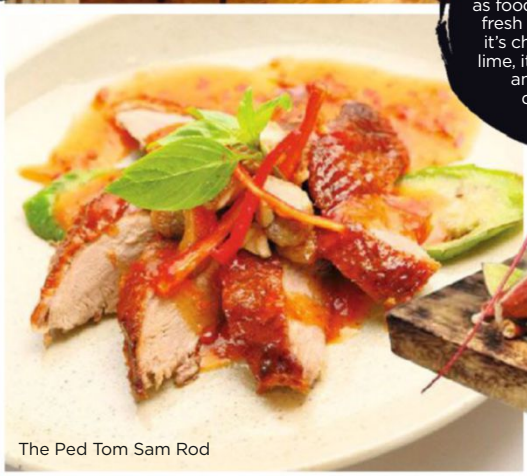
Mango Tree CEO Pitaya Phanphensophan defines traditional Thai cuisine as food that strictly uses fresh herbs ("Whether it's chili, basil, or kaffir lime, it has to be fresh!) and spices that doesn't burn the throat.

MANGO TREE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Currently, Mango Tree has three locations in the Philippines: Mango Tree The Fort, Mango Tree Bistro Trinoma, and Mango Tree Bistro Greenbelt.

Must-tries include the *Talay Prik Thai Dum* (stir-fried mixed seafood with capsicum, spring onion, and black pepper sauce) the *Ped Tod Sam Rod* (roasted duck breast topped with sweet chili sauce), the *Khor Moo Yang* (grilled pork neck served with northeastern Thai dipping sauce), and of course, the *Phad Thai Goong* (Thai stir-fried rice noodles with tiger prawns).

For more information, visit <mangotree.com.ph>



The Ped Tom Sam Rod

During our visit, CEO Pitaya Phanphensophan served us Lobster Pad Thai which he cooked himself

INTERCOFFEENENTAL

Treat your taste buds to a journey of the senses as **TRAVEL NOW** rounds up cafés and their single-origin drinks from all around the world

written and photographed by KIT SINGSON

USA
THE BREADERY

Though Japanese in origin, the method of cold brew coffee has permeated the shores of the Americas, particularly in Seattle. Known for their bottled cold brews, Seattle coffee can be described as light in consistency, but full-bodied and flavorful. The Breadery offers 12-hour cold brew served from their bottles. Have it plain or marbled (served with chocolate syrup and cream). What is the cold brew method? It is a method of brewing coarsely ground coffee bean soaked in room-temperature or cold water for a prolonged period of time. Since the beans never come in contact with heat, it produces a different chemical profile and is less acidic than roasted beans.

The Breadery is located at G/F Emerald Mansion, F. Ortigas Jr. Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

GUATEMALA
YARDSTICK COFFEE

Fancy a cup of specialty coffee in the heart of Makati? Find your way to Esteban Street and pick a spot inside Yardstick's spacious white minimalist room. With an exotic array of specialty coffee that changes every four months, Yardstick Coffee doesn't fail to surprise its guests. As of this writing, brewing at Yardstick is a Latin American pride, **La Perla**. It is a classic-tasting coffee that originates from one of the biggest coffee producers in Central America, Guatemala.

Yardstick Coffee is located at G/F Universal LMS Building, 106 Esteban, Makati City

ITALY
CAFFE PASCUCCI

Basically, Pascucci is to Italians as what Starbucks is to Americans. This coffee chain's trademark drinks are the **Coffee Paspuccio**, a semi-sweet mix of espresso, pas-ciok powder, and hot milk, drizzled with caramel syrup, and the Confuso—coffee that's confusingly served lukewarm. Pair with the **Ciccio Sandwich**.

Caffe Pascucci branches are located at G/F Glorietta 2, Glorietta Complex, Ayala Center, Makati City, and 2/F Robinson's Galleria, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

SOUTH KOREA
CAFFÉ BENE

On a chilly typhoon season, you find yourself wanting a healthy hot drink to warm your body up. Caffe Bene has the answer to that: the **Hot Misugaru Latte**. A different concept compared to the ones we Filipinos used before, a grain mix like this has been part of the Korean lifestyle for years. With all the goodness of barley, misugaru is relatively low in calories and high in protein, that's why it's popular among people on a weight loss diet.

Caffe Bene's branches are located at Eastwood Citywalk 2, Libis, Quezon City; SMX Convention Center, Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City; G/F Multinational Bancorp Center Valero Access, Road 4, Makati City; and SM BF Paranaque, Dr. Santos Avenue corner President's Avenue, Paranaque City

JAPAN
KISSAKO UJI MATCHA CAFÉ

Have the photogenic green drink hot or over ice in Kissako. They use authentic matcha powder from Japan for that distinct earthy taste. If you're not so keen on drinking tea in any form, try their **Haryguchi Blend** made from beans sourced from Tokyo. It may be a little sour—the coffee profile being citrus—but you may add milk and sugar to taste.

Kissako Uji Matcha Café is located at G/F Pioneer Center, Pioneer, Mandaluyong City

ORIGIN OF SPECIES

Much like the birthplace of humankind, coffee is believed to originate in Africa, on the highlands of Ethiopia. There is a legend that tells the story of Kaldi, a goat herder who discovered the coffee trees when he found his goats so "spirited" after eating some native berries. Today, coffee is grown around the Coffee Belt (also called the Bean Belt), a region of the world between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn where most coffee trees thrive.

AUSTRALIA
TOBY'S ESTATE

Order the Kiwi original **Iced Flat White** from Toby's Estate. The drink was developed in the 70s in New Zealand and further developed in Australia in the 80s when there was a significant immigration of Italians to the continent. It is prepared by pouring microfoam (steamed milk with small, fine bubbles, and a glossy velvety consistency) over a single or double shot of espresso and is characterized as typically light. Step up your coffee game by ordering the 12-ounce macchiato called the **Gibraltar** for a stronger kick. Pair with their **Calamansi Pie** for that sweet-citrus contrast.

Toby's Estate branches are located at L.P. Leviste Street, Makati; 3/F Century City Mall, Poblacion, Makati; 3/F SM Aura Premier, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig; and G/F Cybergate Beta Building, Ruby Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

Sam Oh interviews 2NE1's Sandara Park

Members of KTO and PTAA together with host Sam Oh gather for a group photo

YEPPEUN!

The Korea Tourism Organization's **K-Beauty and Fun Night** was filled with entertaining performances, informative talks, and even an appearance from Sandara Park

written by DIANNE SOLEIL VIRAY
photos courtesy of KOREA TOURISM ORGANIZATION

Sandara Park receives a Plaque of Appreciation from KTO for promoting South Korea

The "Wedding" performing arts group

Last February, the **Korean Tourism Organization** or KTO hosted **K-Beauty and Fun Night** at Fairmont Makati, an event where medical professionals from Korea were able to showcase their products and services to potential medical tourists in the Philippines. The event started with free beauty consultations which was followed by talks about plastic surgery from representatives of different Korean clinics.

Dinner was also served as guests were entertained by "Wedding," a non-verbal performance. The highlight of the night was when beloved Korean pop star Sandara Park took the stage to share her favorite experiences in Korea and in the Philippines as well. Before the event, Sandara and K-Pop group NOM actually met with fans during KTO's Travel Tour Expo held at the SMX Convention Center.

Guests enjoying a sumptuous dinner

His Excellency Hyuk Lee, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea

The "Wedding" entertaining guests during the intermission number

Representatives from different Korean clinics came to give talks about plastic surgery

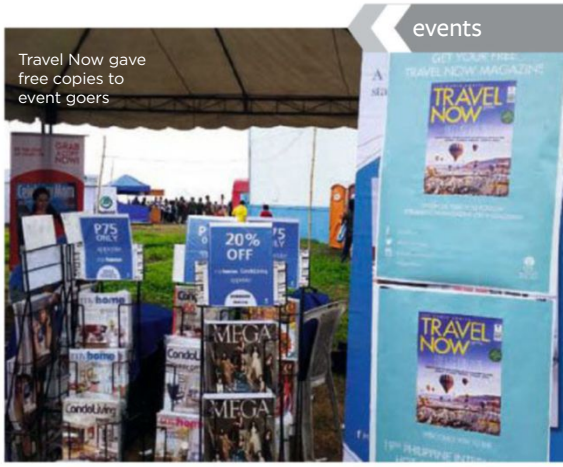
KTO Headquarters Executive Director Se-mann Kim

KTO Manila Director Inshik Park with Sandara Park

Free consultations from JW Plastic Surgery

PTAA President Maria Michelle Victoria

Filling up the balloons takes a lot of air and time!



Travel Now gave free copies to event goers

EVERYTHING THAT FLIES

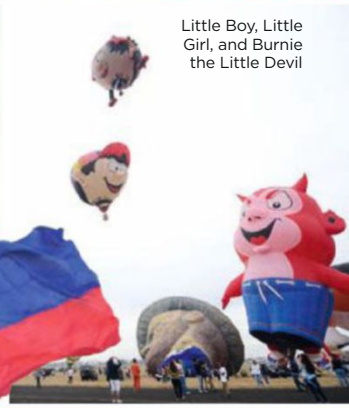
The **19th Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta** was held last February, delighting attendees young and old alike

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of MARTIN SAN DIEGO, ERRON OCAMPO *and* KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO

For its 19th year, the **Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta** entertained attendees with not just hot air balloon shows, but with sky jumps, paragliding exhibitions, aerobatic shows, kite flying demonstrations, car drifting displays, free concerts, and even a spectacular fireworks display as well.

Held from February 12 to 15 at the Clark Freeport Zone, the fiesta featured over 30 hot air balloons, including Burnie the Little Devil, the Upside Down Balloon, Old Lady and the Shoe, Old MacDonald's Farm, Pink Elephant, Octopus, crowd favorites Little Girl and Little Boy, and the exquisitely detailed Vincent Van Gogh. The festivities started at 5:30 AM for each day, with the hot air balloons taking off at around 6:40 AM. Different activities and shows were also held while waiting for the balloons to fly back in. Some attendees were also lucky enough to go on hot air balloon rides.

Right before the balloons take off, a flag jump was held



Little Boy, Little Girl, and Burnie the Little Devil

Attendees who were early were able to catch the sunrise

Paragliders circling the air

Crowds gathered early to catch the hot air balloons taking flight

Kite shows were held to entertain guests as they waited for the hot air balloons to return

The details on the Vincent Van Gogh balloon is amazing!

Spot the difference: the Upside Down balloon soaring above the others

GONE DIGITAL

All of One Mega Group's titles are now available for digital download! Take all our homegrown magazines with you, anytime and anywhere in the world, on your device through Magzter.

ONLY US$2.99 PER ISSUE

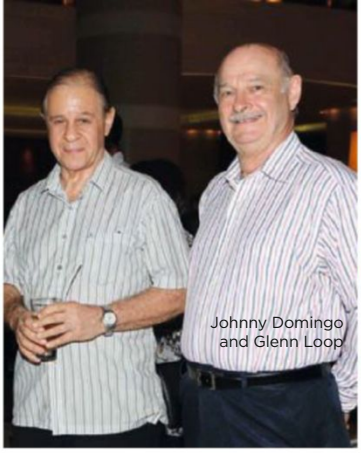
Available now on the App Store

Download it from Google play

POWERED BY:

MAGZTER DIGITAL NEWSSTAND TAP • READ • ENJOY

ONE MEGA GROUP INC.


Johnny Domingo and Glenn Loop

Lana Osmeña and SM Hotels and Conventions Corp SVP-Operations Peggy Angeles

Dilhan Fernando, Dilmah t-Bar Founder Merrill Fernando, Peggy Angeles, Eric Uy, and Radisson Blu Cebu's General Manager Nishan Silva

FRESHLYBREWED

Radisson Blu Cebu launches the **Dilmah t-Bar**

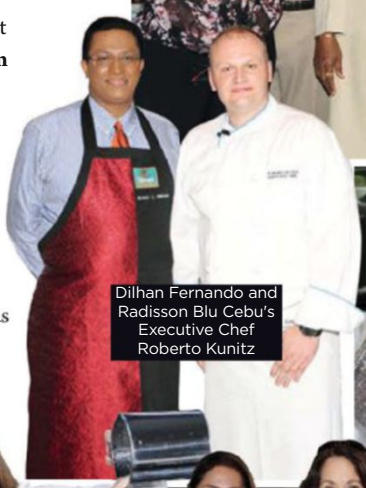
written by MARBEE SHING-GO
photos courtesy of RADISSON BLU CEBU

Dilmah, one of the world's top tea brands, recently launched its first **Dilmah t-Bar** in the country. The launch at its new home in **Radisson Blu Cebu** was led by the founder of Dilmah, Merrill J. Fernando, his son Dilhan who flew in from Sri Lanka, Radisson Blu Cebu's General Manager Nishan Silva, and SM Hotels and Conventions Corporation's SVP Peggy Angeles.

The event started with Merrill sharing what makes Dilmah extraordinary and how he has dedicated over 60 years of his life to perfect the Dilmah experience that is founded on a passionate commitment to quality and authenticity in tea. Guests enjoyed delicious tea-infused savories concocted by Radisson Blu's chefs, all of which were placed in a 20-foot long high tea spread. A tea mixology demonstration by Dilmah tea mixologist Tess Posthumus was also a highlight of the launch.

Nishan and Radisson Blue Cebu's Director of Food and Beverage Ramon Makilan were trained in the Dilmah School of Tea in Sri Lanka prior to the opening of the t-Bar. Currently, there are Dilmah t-Lounges, t-Houses, and t-Bars in several global destinations including Poland, Belarus, Australia, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, and now in the Philippines—all offering a quiet and relaxing environment with a variety of cocktails, mocktails, hot teas, and shakes, as well as tea-inspired gourmet snacks, cakes, and desserts.

Susan Sala, Consul Jose Sala, Merrill Fernando, Eddie Alegrado, Anna Marie Dizon, and Johnny Dizon


Dilhan Fernando and Radisson Blu Cebu's Executive Chef Roberto Kunitz

Kumiko Onda, Cybill Gayatin-Guynn, and Michael Hennessy

Tea Mixology with Tess Posthumus

Mimi Alazas, Lelet Heredia, Bernie Aboitiz, Gemma Go, and Debbie Bontes

Rosebud Sala and Amparito Lhuillier

Aissa dela Cruz, Garrison Rousseau, and Kate Torralba

Philip Rodriguez and Teresin Mendezona

TW STEEL

FLYHIGH MANILA

CELEBRATING THE HEROES OF THE SKY

#WFAN 2015

WORLD FLIGHT ATTENDANT NIGHT

MAY 26, 2015 10PM

VALKYRIE

THE PALACE, MANILA PHILIPPINES

A CELEBRATION FEATURING

ALERMAOS · MARS MIRANDA · ron poe · MARC MARASIGAN · JAY VILLARRUZ · ALTRONE & NIA · MONDORTIZ · O.C. DE GRACIA · MCPAOLO · MarkGonzalez

MICHELLE KING · JASELLE ONGKEKO · ANDREW PEREZ · DANA CRUZ

ALSO BROUGHT TO YOU BY

FLIGHT 001

TRAVEL NOW MAGAZINE — OFFICIAL PUBLICATION PARTNER

AVIS — OFFICIAL TRANSPORTATION PARTNER

NEW WORLD MAKATI HOTEL — OFFICIAL HOTEL PARTNER

AND IN PART BY:

POWERBEAT · SIR GEORGE SALON PREMIER · HYPER-AIRE · E.T.S.Y. MANILA · Burlington STOCKINGS · SLIMMERS WORLD FACE & SKIN CLINIC · Lay Care · TZADMMS · MAIN

WAIVED DOOR CHARGES FOR ALL CABIN CREW. PLEASE SHOW ID OR ANY PROOF. PHP1,500.00 DOOR CHARGE FOR NON-CABIN CREW. FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TABLE RESERVATIONS, PLEASE VISIT **WWW.FLYHIGHMANILA.COM.PH**

DRINKING FOR CHILE

Wine aficionados sat down to celebrate and experience Chilean drinks and cuisine at **Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila**

written by MARBEE SHING-GO
photos courtesy of SOFITEL PHILIPPINE PLAZA MANILA

A rich and dynamic Chilean experience met wine aficionados during the recent **A Taste of Chile** wine dinner, presented in partnership with Genesis Wines and Don Revy, at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza's La Veranda. Genesis Wines' Francisco Montenegro flew in from Chile to introduce the exquisite wine collection to the guests.

Genesis, created from the perfect terroir and winemaking of the Bodegas y Viñedos de Aguirre S.A., is a wine collection created by The Wine Merchant, a group of wine lovers including Philip Dunsmore. He has been in the wine industry for ten years, developing markets all around the world and working for some of the most prestigious Chilean vineyards. Following Genesis' launch in 2010, it has been widely received by several countries like China, Hongkong, and Vietnam.

Guests enjoyed a five-course dinner prepared by the masterful artisans of Spiral, ideally paired with seven complex wines from the Genesis Reserva Range, namely Genesis Reserva Sauvignon Blanc 2012, Genesis Reserva Carmenere 2012, Genesis Reserva Chardonnay 2012, Genesis Reserva Syrah 2012, Genesis Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon 2012, Genesis Gran Reserva Cabernet / Syrah 2010, and Genesis Gran Reserva Syrah 2010.

The magnificent flavor and aroma of the Genesis collection certainly reflected the de Aquirre family's passion and dedication in bringing the terroirs of Chile's Maulle Valley to their wines.

Sofitel's PR Director Yasmine Hidalgo, Don Revy's Robbie Ferguson, Sofitel's F&B Assistant Manager Tanguy Gras, and Spiral Operations Manager Kyungku Han

Clearstar's Darren Sy, Twireless' Patrick Wayne Tan, Huawei Philippines' Charles Wu, Peter Tong, and Jojo Vega

Sofitel General Manager Adam Laker and F&B Director Damien Marchenay

Rustan's Wine Specialist Camille Delbecq and Genesis Wines Brand Ambassador Francisco Montenegro

OraCare's new record for most number of people gargling with mouthwash was achieved with 2040 participants

Ropali's largest motorcycle burnout in Tagaytay

The VIPs from Ropali Motorcycles celebrating their new world record

The Medical City largest reunion of people born in the same hospital

Ropali's largest tricycle parade in Isabela

RECORD-BREAKING

History Channel makes history by setting new records for the Philippines for **World Record Week**

written by KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO
photos courtesy of HISTORY CHANNEL

Last April 8 to 12, History Channel, Ropali Motorcycles, Center for Culinary Arts, OraCare, Shakey's, and The Medical City teamed up to break four world records for their event **World Record Week**, held in several venues, including Cauyan, Isabela. Here, Ropali Motorcycles' parade of 681 tricycles beat the previous record of Beijing, China (which had 317 tricycles). Ropali Motorycles also beat the previous record of largest number of motorcycle burnouts, besting Maryville, Tennessee's 213 with Tagaytay's 300.

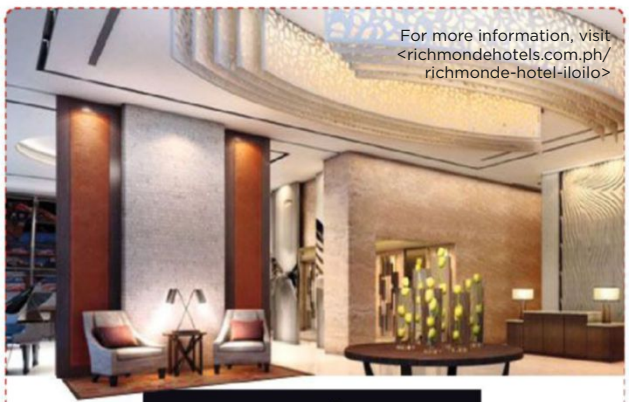
OraCare also set a new world record for the most number of people gargling with mouthwash simultaneously with 2040 participants (the previous record was Canada's 1974). Probably the hardest record to break was Medical City's largest reunion of people born in the same hospital. While Hong Kong's previous record was at 958 people, Medical City edged that out by bringing together 1220 people.

"History is proud of these astounding Filipino accomplishments and these wouldn't have been possible without the relentless drive and support of our partners. We are also grateful to all the participants who made these records with us, who are one with us in making history with six new Guinness world records for the Philippines," said A+E Networks Asia Philippines Country Head Jacque Ruby.

SOMEWHEREOUTTHERE

Capture the beauty of nature (and look good while doing it too!) before coming "home" and relaxing in these three luxury hotels

WHERE TO STAY



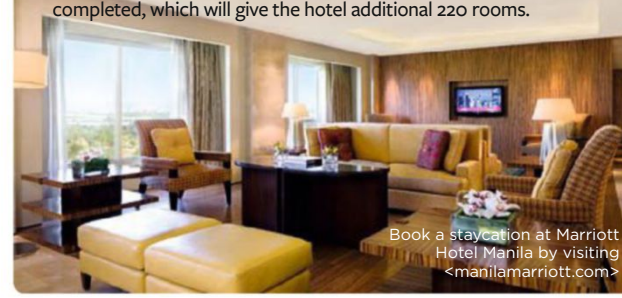
For more information, visit <richmondehotels.com.ph/richmonde-hotel-iloilo>

RICHMONDE HOTEL ILOILO

Set to open later this year, the Richmonde Hotel Iloilo will have 149 rooms that are said to evoke and pay homage to the Ilonggo culture, history, and lifestyle. Designed by internationally renowned design company Gettys, the interiors of the hotel will have a warm and welcoming atmosphere, inspired by the hospitable and cheery locals.

MARIOTT HOTEL MANILA

Chosen as one of TripAdvisor's Top 25 Hotels in The Philippines in the 2015 Travelers' Choice Awards, Marriott Hotel Manila is a perfect venue for your weekend staycation. General Manager Bruce Winton says "Pursuing excellence is deeply rooted in Marriott's core values—it makes us who we are, and we are grateful for receiving this award. It is a stamp of approval that we are in the right direction." Since opening in 2009, the hotel has been known for its excellent service, delicious food, and comfortable rooms. Next year, the West Wing is expected to be completed, which will give the hotel additional 220 rooms.



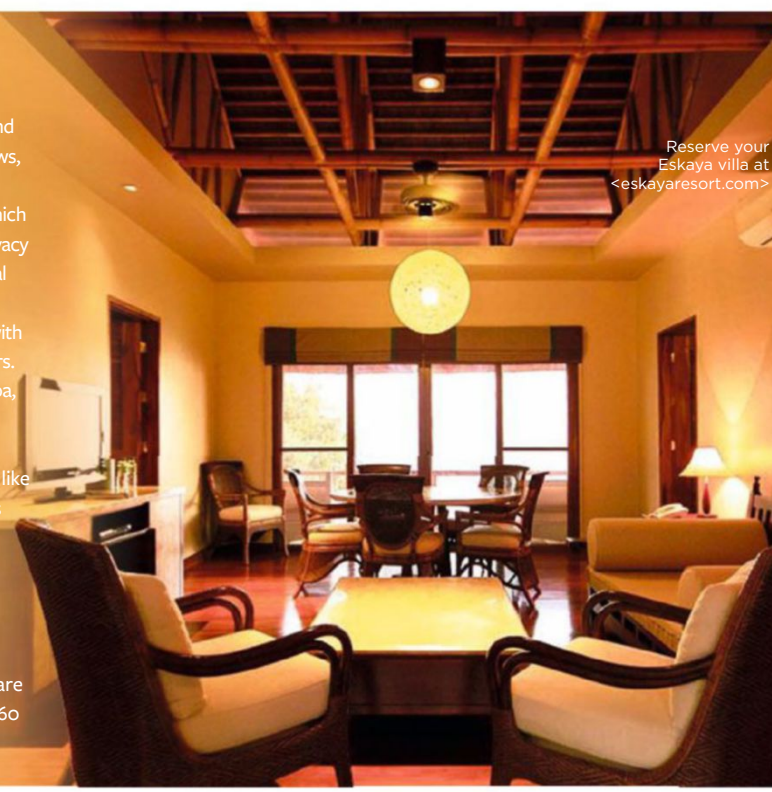
Book a staycation at Marriott Hotel Manila by visiting <manilamarriott.com>

ESKAYA BEACH RESORT AND SPA

Visiting Bohol? Book a stay at Eskaya Beach Resort and Spa for some privacy. You'll be treated to spectacular views, a breathtaking beach front, and world-class facilities. The resort is made up of 15 detached one-story villas, all of which are strategically distanced from each other to ensure privacy among guests. Each villa is designed to look like traditional Filipino homes and was constructed using indigenous materials like bamboo and cogon. Each one also comes with its own private pool, a whirlpool tub, and outdoor showers. Guests can get pampered even more at the Handuraw Spa, which offers traditional and modern treatments.

Dining at Eskaya's Lantawan Restaurant is also a unique experience, as it specializes in Boholano dishes like *humba*, a kind of pork stew. The restaurant also serves international and other Filipino fare. The greens and other vegetables are sourced right from the resort's own gardens, so you can be sure that their salads and other vegetable dishes are fresh and healthy.

Eskaya is currently undergoing a P150-million expansion project which will add nine more villas that are set to open in June. The resort is also planning to add 60 deluxe rooms.



Reserve your Eskaya villa at <eskayaresort.com>

COMPILED BY **KLARA ISKRA AÑONUEVO**

HOW TO LOOK GOOD

Human Nature 100% Natural SafeProtect SPF 30 is priced at P299.75 (50 grams) and P649.75 (200 grams)

HUMAN NATURE 100% NATURAL SAFEPROTECT SPF 30

We've always advocated slathering some sunscreen each time you step outside (regardless if you're at the beach, in the mountains, or in the middle of the city), and this handy sunblock from Human Nature is ideal for travelers. It's 100% natural, and its formula protects against UVA and UVB rays. This product is also sea-safe, so you can swim in the ocean with sunblock on without hurting the environment. *Visit <humanheartnature.com> for more information.*

MAYBELLINE NEW YORK'S GREAT LASH WATERPROOF MASCARA

To celebrate 100 years of existence, Maybelline has brought their Great Lash Waterproof Mascara to the Philippines. The already iconic mascara has a global following who can't get enough of its long-lasting and water-proof formula. Coupled with its lash-doubling brush applicator, it gives users healthier, fuller, and longer looking lashes. *For more information, like them on MaybellinePhilippines.*

Maybelline New York's Great Lash Waterproof Mascara will be available only until September 2015 for P350

COLOUR COLLECTION CHUBBY STICKS GLIDE-ON LIP CRAYON

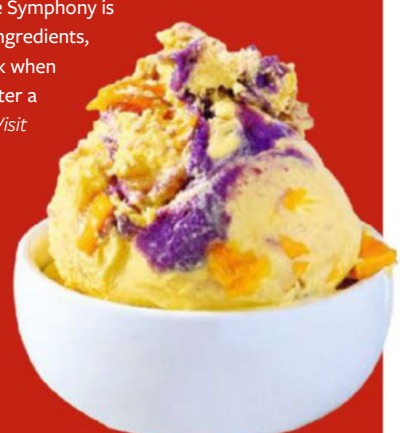
Stash your favorite shade of Colour Collection Chubby Sticks Glide-On Lip Crayon in your carry-on luggage

Just because you're in the outdoors doesn't mean you can't put a spotlight on your lips! Colour Collection's Chubby Sticks come in Strawberry Daiquiri, Peach Bellini, Apple Martini, Chocolate Margarita, and Rum Raisin. The formula in these lip crayons also ensure that your lips will stay soft and supple throughout the day.

WHAT TO EAT

BONO ARTISANAL GELATO'S MANGO UBE SYMPHONY

This unique blend recently won the People's Choice Award at the Gelato World Tour 2015 held in Singapore, and it's no surprise why—created by BONO's Chief R&D Zarah Zaragoza-Manikan, the Mango Ube Symphony Gelato has a smooth mango gelato base mixed with swirls of purple yam jam and topped with rhum-soaked dried mango strips. Like all BONO flavors, the Mango Ube Symphony is made with all-natural ingredients, making it an ideal snack when you need to cool off after a long day of exploring. *Visit <gelatobono.com> for more information.*



Get the Mango Ube Symphony at BONO Artisanal Gelato branches in SM Aura, The Podium, and SM Megamall

WHAT TO BRING

The Starmobile UP Snap comes in white, dark blue, and aqua, and retails at P5990

STARMOBILE UP SNAP

If you keep getting frustrated over the quality of pictures your smartphone gives you in low light conditions, you might want to consider getting yourself Starmobile's UP Snap, the first Filipino smartphone with an Ultra Pixel camera sensor. This, along with its wide aperture f/2.0 lens, will give users a bright image, even in dark or dimly lit places. With the UP Snap, users also won't need to worry about battery life, as its quad-core chipset makes sure it's still powered up, even after a whole day of usage (and yes, that includes having data connection!).

ROCCO ROAD

Baguio born-and-raised Starstruck alumnus **Rocco Nacino** has gained popularity over the years, making a name for himself in GMA's primetime shows. These days, he travels often with celebrity girlfriend Lovi Poe. Rocco shares with **TRAVEL NOW** his travel must-haves

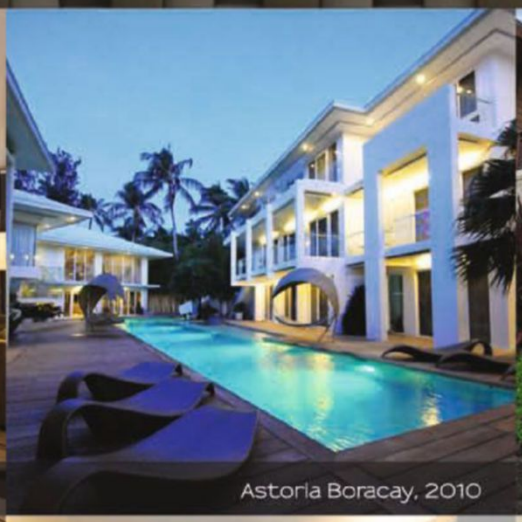
as told to DIANNE SOLEIL VIRAY
photographed by RON MENDOZA OF STUDIO 100
additional photo courtesy of STUDIO 100
art directed by MERIAM OTARRA

1 RUNNING CLOTHES *Ine-enjoy ko talaga yung pagkain kahit saan man ako pumunta* (I always enjoy the food wherever I go). So I make sure every morning to do some exercise. For example, Lovi and I went to Rome, and we would get up in the morning then run *kasi* double purpose *na e. Para maghanap ng* next *na pupuntahan* (because it served another purpose: to look for another place to explore.) **2 TOILETRIES** *Napaka-importante sa akin ng* (it's very important for me to have) toothpaste, toothbrush, deodorant, soap for the maintenance of my skin, and moisturizer, especially when I go to cold countries. **3 TOWEL** *Kasi pawisin ako, konting lakad lang* (Because I sweat easily, a short walk) under the sun and I already start sweating. **4 SUNGLASSES** A pair of shades to go with your outfit for the day for its basic purpose. *Lalo na pag* sunny *na yung pupuntahan* (especially when we're going to a sunny place). **5 KNIFE** I keep this in hand in the event that I need to protect myself. **6 INSECT REPELLANT** I usually get lots of bites from mosquitoes. **7 HAND SANITIZER** I can't leave home without it. **8 HANDKERCHIEF** I always keep my handkerchief in my right pocket. *Lumalabas yung pagka* OC *ko* (It's due to my obsessive-compulsiveness). **9 LAPTOP** *Kung ano mang* pictures *makuha ko sa araw na yun dinidiretso ko na sa* laptop *ko para* (whatever photos I took during that day, I transfer it directly to my laptop so) I can edit or make a mini movie about it. **10 ANTI-THEFT BAG** It can't be easily slashed or pickpocketed. This bag helped me a lot. It alleviated the stress that I had when I was in Europe *kasi marami daw* (because I heard there are a lot of) pickpockets. *Alam ko* safe *yung* passport *ko, yung* credit cards, *at yung* cash. (I know my passport, my credit cards, and cash are safe.)

rider
SANDALS
LIFE A
HOLIC
SM Department Stores • Bambu • Fashion Rack • Landmark • Metro Gaisano • Olympic Village • Planet Sports • Sports Central
Toby's • The Athlete's Foot • NCCC Department Stores • American Boulevard • Bohol Quality • Gaisano Davao
Hip Street • Islands & More-NAIA 3 • Island City Mall • Shoe Center-Greenhills • Sta. Lucia Department Store • Victoria Plaza-Davao
Like RiderPhilippines on

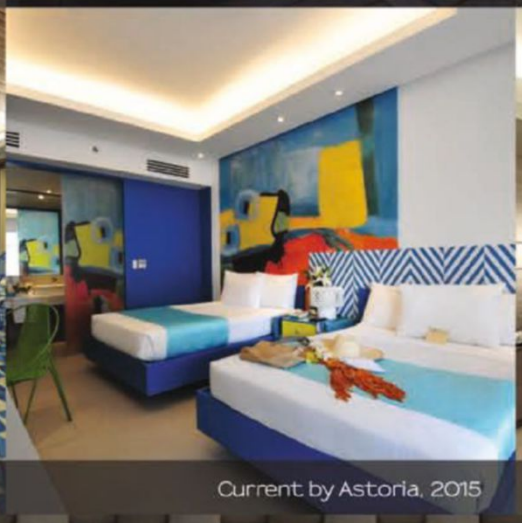
CREATE UNFORGETTABLE VACATIONS AT ANY ASTORIA PROPERTY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Astoria Plaza, 2001


Astoria Boracay, 2010

Astoria Bohol, 2012

Astoria Palawan, 2014


Current by Astoria, 2015

Astoria Greenbelt, 2015

ASTORIA
HOTELS & RESORTS

LUXE RETREATS ▪ INCOMPARABLE HOSPITALITY ▪ SPECTACULAR DESTINATIONS

CORPORATE SALES OFFICE

15 J. ESCRIVA DRIVE, ORTIGAS BUSINESS DISTRICT, PASIG CITY, 1600 PHILIPPINES
(+632) 687 1111 | INFO@ASTORIAHOTELSANDRESORTS.COM
WWW.ASTORIAHOTELSANDRESORTS.COM

MANAGED BY ASIAN GRAND LEGACY